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The Nation.

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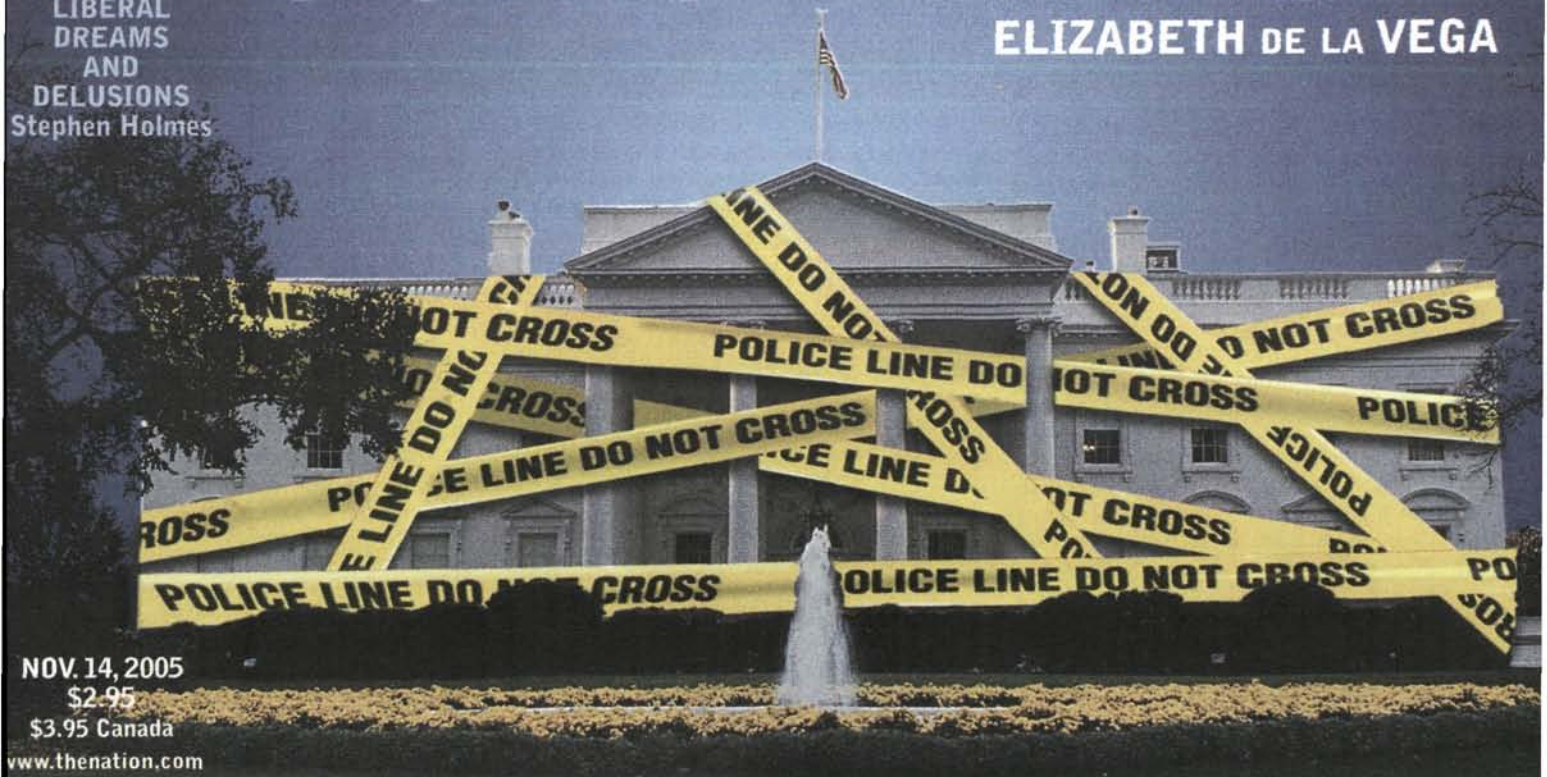

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LETTERS

R. O. BLECHMAN

TENDER MERCENARIES

Falls Church, Va.

■ In "Blackwater Down" [Oct. 10] Jeremy Scahill wrote that "mercenaries from companies like DynCorp, Intercon, American Security Group, Blackhawk, Wackenhut and an Israeli company called Instinctive Shooting International (ISI) are fanning out to guard private businesses and homes, as well as government projects and institutions."

For the record, employees of DynCorp International did not "fan out" in New Orleans or any other area affected by Hurricane Katrina. DynCorp International (DI) did not send anyone to the area to provide security services until we had made specific arrangements with clients and knew exactly what our responsibilities would be.

In the immediate aftermath of Katrina, Tenet Health Organization Group engaged DI to help protect its facilities, patients and employees. In the course of our work with Tenet, we have evacuated scores of employees and dozens of animals who had taken refuge in at least two of its hospitals, escorted company officials while they assessed damages, and even transported Tenet officials to a local bank to arrange payroll for their employees.

The people who are performing this security work are all fully certified police officers—either retired or on leave from their jobs—who were deputized by and work under the supervision of the St. Bernard Parish Sheriff's Department. They are not mercenaries, as Scahill disparagingly described them.

Security is only one of many service areas in which DynCorp International works. In the area affected by Katrina and Rita, DI helicopters are providing transportation, DI aviation technicians at several military bases are servicing aircraft that have been deployed for the relief effort, Marine Spill Response Corporation ships with DI crews are repairing oil platforms and cleaning spills, and DI logistics experts are installing temporary housing and office facilities for local officials and relief in St. Bernard Parish.

STEPHEN J. CANNON
President and CEO
DynCorp International

Away From New Orleans

■ "Blackwater Down" by Jeremy Scahill and the mug shot of the greedy slimeball on your cover make me all the more reluctant to return to New Orleans. Much to my extreme disappointment and my feelings of absolute helplessness, I realize that the city has been invaded and will be permanently altered.

LAURA BRALY
Kevil, Ky.

■ About private security forces being in New Orleans right after Katrina: The beating of a 64-year-old retired black schoolteacher there showed not only the white police officers but two guys identified as "FBI." Were these "FBI" guys really private security contractors? Why didn't they intervene to stop the beating? Why was the bloodied victim of police brutality taken to an *army* medical facility for treatment? This episode was sickening. It sure sent the message "they" probably want to send: "If you're black, don't come back!"

LINDA R. POOLE

SCAHILL REPLIES

Brooklyn, NY

■ To hear Stephen Cannon tell it, DynCorp has been reincarnated as the Red Cross. He objects to the term "mercenary." The primary quality of a mercenary is that his main motivation is money. That is why DynCorp forces, paid much more than regular US military forces, are in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Africa, the Balkans—it is profitable. DynCorp itself is a mercenary, making a killing for its services. In the past two years alone, the company's revenues have doubled to more than $1.9 billion. Not bad for not being mercenaries.

As a journalist, I'm afraid I have to judge DynCorp not on the spin of its CEO but on its record. Here are just a few of the reasons for serious concern about DynCorp forces operating on US soil:

§ DynCorp employees in Bosnia, where the company plays a major policing role, have engaged in organized sex-slave trading with girls as young as 12, and DynCorp's Bosnia site supervisor was filmed raping a woman. A subsequent lawsuit, filed by a company whistleblower, alleged that "employees and supervisors from DynCorp were engaging in perverse, illegal and inhumane behavior [and] were purchasing illegal weapons, women, forged passports and [participating in] other immoral acts." The whisteblower, with whom DynCorp eventually settled, "witnessed coworkers and supervisors literally buying and selling women for their own personal enjoyment, and employees would brag about the various ages and talents of the individual slaves they had purchased." The company's initial response was to fire the whistleblowers. The employees involved in the sex ring were transferred out of the country. Some were eventually fired, although none were ever criminally prosecuted. One of the whistleblowers told Congress, "DynCorp is the worst diplomat our country could ever want overseas."

§ In Afghanistan, where DynCorp guards President Hamid Karzai, the company has a reputation for brutality and recklessness, including serious complaints from internationals of intimidation. It has even been rebuked by the State Department for its "aggressive behavior" in interactions with European diplomats, NATO forces and journalists. A BBC correspondent also witnessed one of the guards slapping an Afghan government minister.

§ In Haiti earlier this year DynCorp bodyguards on the detail of interim president Boniface Alexandre beat at least two journalists trying to cover a presidential event. DynCorp has had a checkered past in Haiti, where it "trained" the national police force after the original coup against President Aristide, bringing several feared Tonton Macoutes leaders back into prominence.

§ The company is facing a major lawsuit filed by 10,000 Ecuadoreans forced to live (and die) with the impact of DynCorp's toxic crop spraying, which it does in several Latin American countries, including Colombia, as part of Plan Colombia. Representative Jan Schakowsky, an Illinois Democrat, charges that "DynCorp's employees have a history of behaving like cowboys." A leading Colombian newsweekly called them "lawless Rambos."

As DynCorp swallows up more lucrative government contracts by the week, some in Congress are raising questions. "Is it [the] policy of the US government to reward companies that traffic in women and little girls?" Representative Cynthia McKinney asked Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in March.

Using private military contractors like DynCorp in places like Afghanistan and Iraq allows the government greater secrecy and less transparency and accountability. The real question is: Why are these particular firms needed in the United States for what should be relief and reconstruction operations? The answer is that they are not, but their road to the lucrative contracts is paved with political connections and the offer to their employers of plausible deniability. Unfortunately, if recent history is any indicator, the damage from this cronyism could extend well beyond the taxpayers' pockets to the safety and security of the people of New Orleans and other cities unfortunate enough to encounter these private security forces.

Take the words of Brig. Gen. Karl Horst, deputy commander of the Third Infantry Division in charge of security in Baghdad. In September he said this of DynCorp and other security firms in Iraq: "These guys run loose in this country and do stupid stuff. There's no authority over them, so you can't come down on them hard when they escalate force.... They shoot people,

(Continued on Page 28)

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IN THIS ISSUE

2 **LETTERS**

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 CULTURE OF COLLUSION

4 CONSERVATIVE CRACKUP
Eyal Press

5 A TALE OF TWO TRAGEDIES
Tariq Ali

6 STATE OF THE MAGAZINES
Victor Navasky

8 IN FACT...

COLUMNS

6 DEADLINE POET
Another Miracle From Bill Frist
Calvin Trillin

9 BEAT THE DEVIL
Final Days: Only 39 Months to Go
Alexander Cockburn

10 SUBJECT TO DEBATE
Madam President, Madam President
Katha Pollitt

ARTICLES

11 WHITE HOUSE CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY
A former prosecutor argues Bush & Co. illegally colluded to defraud Congress.
Elizabeth de la Vega

16 THE QUESTION OF KURDISTAN
Will Iraq split apart? Perhaps. But powerful forces are keeping it together.
Christian Parenti

22 SAY IT AIN'T SO, BIG LEAGUES
They harvest Dominican baseball talent on the cheap, and give little in return.
Dave Zirin

24 CORRUPTION OF HOPE IN BRAZIL
How did Lula's party of participatory democracy become a party of bribery?
Hilary Wainwright

27 SALVADOR MEMORIES
A photo show recalls the civil war.
Scott Sherman

BOOKS & THE ARTS

29 BERMAN: Power and the Idealists: Or, The Passion of Joschka Fischer and Its Aftermath
RIEFF: At the Point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention
Stephen Holmes

40 COETZEE: Slow Man
Pankaj Mishra

43 Writer's Block (poem)
Alan Feldman

43 Passion (poem)
David Mason

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EDITORIALS

Culture of Collusion

What started as a common cold for selected Republican officeholders has turned into raging influenza for our democracy. The Democrats are already counting Congressional seats to be gained from the litany of GOP scandals, but we think they misunderstand the nature of this contagion.

Yes, we too would like to see the Democrats regain majorities in Congress and hope that becomes possible. But they—and the media as well—are partly responsible for the sorry state of affairs. Democratic leaders vent predictably over Tom DeLay's alleged money-laundering and the disgraceful response to Hurricane Katrina yet remain subdued on the far larger transgressions associated with the war in Iraq. Republicans wrap themselves in "moral issues" while ignoring the Constitution-shredding immorality of lying to the country and Congress on the largest moral question of all—the decision to invade another nation, pre-emptively and based on fictitious claims.

As we go to press, special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald is nearing the end of his investigation into the Plame/CIA leak scandal, with indictments of several high-level Bush Administration officials widely predicted. As most readers know, the investigation stemmed from the leak to reporters of the name of Valerie Wilson, *née* Plame, at the time an undercover CIA agent. In leaking her name to journalists, officials are suspected of having violated the 1982 Intelligence Identities Protection Act and the section of the 1917 Espionage Act that prohibits leaks of classified information to unauthorized people. (Secondary charges stemming from the investigation, such as perjury or obstruction, are also possible.)

We have for years expressed grave doubts about these laws; they inhibit the free flow of information and have a chilling effect on the practice of responsible journalism, especially when government classifies far too much information in the first place. But the Plame investigation illuminates the larger scandal of the Bush Administration's lying to the American people to sell us on an unnecessary war—a war that has cost the lives of 2,000 Americans and tens of thousands of Iraqis, has fostered terrorism in the Middle East and has set Iraq on the path to civil war. Even if the Plame affair ends without a strong resolution, the far larger scandal of this war and all its associated horrors will be with us for years. The question of impeachment might sound unlikely at this hour, but it is not too soon to study up on the matter—see Elizabeth de la Vega's exploration on page 11.

The Democrats and the media colluded in this awesome deception. Not only did most Democratic leaders vote to support the war; even at this late hour many of them—including Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden and Charles Schumer—refuse to come out clearly against it or to call for an end to the occupation. Echoing John Kerry's disastrous comment during the 2004 campaign, Senator Schumer said recently on *Meet the Press* that even if he knew then what he knows now, he still would have voted for the war. And the major media joined in the post-9/11 culture of collusion. The *New York Times*—relying heavily on the inflamed dispatches of Judith Miller, now embroiled in the Plame investigation—was so irresponsible in the run-up to the war that it had to print an apology.

Deceit and misinformation is poison to an open society. We need a much tougher investigation of how the American people were misled on the purpose of this war. We need much tougher, more skeptical media. And we need the Democrats to act like an opposition party. Because without a genuine opposition, the disease of corruption and criminality threatens democracy itself.

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COMMENT

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Conservative Crackup

Religious conservatives and neocons furious about the nomination of Harriet Miers. Foreign policy realists blasting the Administration about Iraq. Libertarians irate about the explosion of government spending on the GOP's watch. It's open season on the Bush Administration, and lately some of the most heated salvos have been coming from the right. In a much discussed speech delivered in Washington recently, Lawrence Wilkerson, chief of staff at the State Department from 2001 to '05, assailed the "Cheney-Rumsfeld cabal" that has hijacked US foreign policy, saying, "The case that I saw over four-plus years was a case I have never seen in my studies of aberrations, bastardizations, perturbations, changes to the national security decision-making process." In the latest *New Yorker* former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft is no less damning, saying of Iraq, "This was said to be part of the war on terror, but Iraq feeds terrorism."

Such comments would likely have been dismissed as treasonous by conservative pundits and right-wing bloggers a year ago, but the collapse of public support for the war coupled with George W. Bush's plummeting approval ratings have prompted a very different reaction today. "I think that people in Congress and the Senate, especially those up for re-election, are looking very carefully at the polls and trying to determine where the tide goes," says Scott McConnell, an editor at *The American Conservative*, a publication that has featured hard-hitting criticism of the Bush Administration's foreign policy from both realist and isolationist perspectives. McConnell himself is waiting to see whether the toxicity of Bush on issues like Iraq has reached the point that Republicans will have no choice but to distance themselves from the White House next year. "I don't think they're at the point where they've decided that Bush/Rove/Iraq is a decisive liability," he says, "but they are thinking about it every day."

Whatever the fallout, it is clear that the Administration's incompetence and detachment from reality, displayed so starkly after Hurricane Katrina, and its scheming, Nixonian governing style have reached the tipping point, to the extent that even people inclined to look favorably on the White House find it difficult to deny what they see. "Sometimes in my dark moments, I think he's 'The Manchurian Candidate' designed to discredit all the ideas I believe in," joked columnist David Brooks of the President recently. Of course, Brooks is among those who has decried liberal Bush-bashing, the sort now being meted out by people like former White House speechwriter David Frum and columnist George Will in response to the nomination of Miers, about whom Brooks himself wrote (upon wading through some of her published work): "I don't know if by mere quotation I can fully convey the relentless march of vapid abstractions that mark [her] prose."

There is, to be sure, an element of face-saving to some of this: Smart conservatives realize it might be a good idea to debark from what increasingly feels like a sinking ship. As a result, the tone of much conservative writing about Bush has lost its fawning deference and acquired an edge, even if it is true that some of the Administration's right-wing critics, like Frum and William Kristol, still count themselves among its friends. But the mounting

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COMMENT

criticism also reflects a growing realization that the principles for which conservatism is supposed to stand—limited government, fiscal responsibility, prudence, restraint—are nowhere evident in this Administration's record. As conservative economist and columnist Bruce Bartlett put it in a recent *Washington Times* editorial, "The truth is now dawning on many movement conservatives that George W. Bush is not one of them and never has been."

Actually, as I reported a while ago, it has dawned on some people who hold conservative principles dear that Bush does not adhere to them [see Press, "Even Conservatives Are Wondering: Is Bush One of Us?" May 31, 2004]. Among them are realists who understood that exporting democracy through the barrel of a gun with little regard for history or cultural differences is messianic and radical, not conservative; deficit hawks who pointed out that cutting taxes during a war is the height of recklessness, not fiscal responsibility; and libertarians who watched in disgust as the Administration lavished subsidies on the energy, pharmaceutical, sugar and cotton industries while claiming it championed small government (a notion that in reality seems to be applied only to the poor and vulnerable). When people like former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and former counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke dared to point some of these things out, they were dismissed as traitors or closet liberals with axes to grind by the same conservative media that now make room for White House critics.

Which, in turn, made it possible for the Bush Administration to pursue an agenda that has come to be viewed as "conservative," regardless of what some Republicans suddenly experiencing second thoughts might wish. That the C-word, conservatism, is increasingly associated with others, like "cronyism" and "corruption," of course, might not seem to everyone to be such a bad thing.

EYAL PRESS

Eyal Press is a Nation *contributing writer.*

A Tale of Two Tragedies

The government figures provided the third week after Pakistan's earthquake are probably a serious underestimate, but they indicate the scale of the catastrophe: 50,000 dead, 74,000 injured and at least 3.3 million—far more than after the tsunami—left homeless, virtually all of them in the mountains, where snow begins to fall in November. The poverty of the overwhelming majority of the victims is only too apparent. Bagh, a town north of Muzaffarabad, has virtually ceased to exist. In Islamabad a relief worker told me that "there is a stench of rotting corpses everywhere. In their midst survivors are searching for food. Local people say that 50,000 have died in this town alone. And more will follow if medicines and food are not equitably distributed."

The continuing shortage of helicopters in Pakistan has meant that the survivors in the more remote mountain villages on the Indo-Pak border in Kashmir remain out of reach. In neighboring Afghanistan, where there is a glut of helicopters, NATO has been reluctant to release too many from the war zone despite the advice of Robert Kaplan in the *International Herald Tribune*, who had this to say about benevolent US-NATO rescue missions: "The distinctions between war and relief, between domestic and foreign deployments, are breaking down.... hunting down Al Qaeda in its lair will be impossible without the goodwill of the local population. That attitude can be generated by relief work of the kind taking place in Kashmir. It's the classic counterinsurgency model: Winning without firing a shot."

Despite the desperate situation, the Pakistani government declined India's offer of helicopters. National pride or sheer stupidity, it is unforgivable when lives are at stake. The uniformed establishment in Pakistan fears a lasting peace, because it would remove the reason for maintaining a gigantic military-industrial complex. The inability of the army to centralize and distribute relief has meant that local jihadi militias have tended to monopolize the handing out of food and tents. Enforced prayers in these conditions have become part of the problem.

This is by no means the worst disaster to hit the country. When a cyclone ravaged Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) in 1970, up to half a million Bengalis perished. The indifference of the predominantly West Pakistani elite undoubtedly helped fan the flames of nationalism, and the country split a year later. The October 8 earthquake can't be ignored so easily because Islamabad itself was struck. There has been an outpouring of support for the victims, but how long will it last? And what will happen when the gaze of the cameras shifts elsewhere?

This latest wound has brought others to the surface. A deeper and darker malaise, barely noticed by the elite but taken for granted by most citizens, has infected the country for decades. The balance sheet tells the tale of corrupt bureaucrats, tainted army officers and polluted politicians, of unending privilege and graft, protected mafias and the bloated profits of the heroin and arms industries. Add to this the brutal hypocrisy of the Islamist parties, and the picture is complete. It is in this context that many ordinary people on the street view the recent disaster. At a state school in Lahore the students collected toys for children who survived the tragedy; when asked whom they'd like to distribute the toys, the students voted unanimously against any politicians, army officers or civilian bureaucrats. They preferred a doctor.

There is much talk in Islamabad of reconstruction, and even civilian prime minister Shaukat "Shortcut" Aziz has spoken of a five-year plan to rebuild the destroyed cities and rehabilitate the victims, but does the military high command have the will to impose such a solution? Even in normal times the poor have limited access to doctors and nurses. The state-of-the-art hospitals in the big cities are exclusively for the wealthy. The shortage of medical staff has been a curse for the past fifty years. No regime, military or civilian, has succeeded in creating a proper social infrastructure, a safety net for less privileged citizens, who are a large majority of the population. At times like this the entire country feels the need, but the elite will soon forget till memories are revived by the next disaster. In a privatized world, where the prescriptions offered by global financial institutions are taken as holy writ by the rulers, the state is not encouraged to buck the system.

Will the rebuilt cities and villages be constructed differently to avoid another calamity? Edward Durrell Stone, one of the architects who built Islamabad in the late 1960s, was unhappy with the site because of the geological fault line and the weak soil.

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COMMENT

Overruled by the military dictator of the day, he advised that no structure higher than three stories ever be built. He was ignored.

What will happen to the widows and orphans? The Jamaat-i-Islami party has suggested that the orphans be placed under its control so they can be properly looked after, fed and educated in its *madrassahs*. There are worse fates for the children—the refugee camp in Islamabad has already become a scouting area for child-sex mafias and pimps in search of easy recruits—but the Pakistani government should resist this demand and create a network of state schools and orphanages where the children can be better protected. To leave them to the mercy of the Islamist groups could result in the loss of another generation.

Pakistan's rulers have usually shied away from complex, substantial issues facing the country. I fear this tragedy will not jolt them sufficiently to abandon their complacency. As always, it is the poor who will continue to suffer. TARIQ ALI

Tariq Ali is an editor of New Left Review. *The latest novel of his Islam Quintet,* A Sultan in Palermo, *was published earlier this year by Verso.*

State of the Magazines

"I have the impression," magazine consultant Jim Kobak wrote in his classic *How to Start a Magazine*, "that every man, woman and child in the United States has an idea for a magazine that is 'needed' (which is stronger than 'wanted') by the American people."

I thought of this observation when I was in London recently visiting with David Goodheart, who was celebrating the tenth anniversary of *Prospect*, which he describes as "a post–grand narrative magazine" (in contrast to its two predecessors, the CIA-funded *Encounter* and the underfunded *Marxism Today*, which went out of business in 1991).

Simultaneously, Katrina vanden Heuvel had set off for Cambridge, Massachusetts, to serve on a Kennedy School panel celebrating what would have been the tenth anniversary of *George*, the monthly magazine conceived, founded and edited by the late John F. Kennedy Jr., who liked to refer to it as a political publication "for 'postpartisan' America." (Alas, Katrina's plane was canceled, but the panel went on.)

George lasted about a year after Kennedy died—when its backer, the publishing conglomerate Hachette Filipacchi, pulled the plug. At the time, many culture-watchers observed that without the Kennedy glitz, the post-Kennedy magazine was doomed. Such speculation seemed poetically justified; as culture-watcher Neal Gabler has argued, in our entertainment-driven, celebrity-oriented society, the new standard of value has less to do with content than with "whether or not something can grab and then hold the public's attention." As Gabler put it, politics is "show business for ugly people." (JFK Jr. himself once told the *New York Times* that politics was merely another aspect of cultural life, "not all that different from sports, music and art.")

The problem with the glib post-Kennedy put-downs is twofold. First, his successor-editor Frank Lalli's *George* seemed to be turning some sort of economic corner—its circulation was up—when the magazine went under, or so he told a luncheon audience at the time. Even if Hachette Filipacchi was right—that *George* could not succeed without Kennedy—I'd argue that it was not so much because the JFK Jr. glitz was missing; it was because JFK Jr. *himself* was missing. Even "postpartisan" magazines require the energy, commitment and, yes, fanatical dedication that founders in particular, and obsessed editors in general, bring to their jobs.

While in London I had lunch with the staff of the ninety-two-year-old democratic socialist journal *The New Statesman*, hosted by its new editor, John Kempfner; and its publisher, Geoffrey Robinson, MP. Unlike *Prospect*, there is no post-anything in *The New Statesman*'s old-fashioned commitment to social democracy. Whether its antiwar, pro-Labour politics will be sufficient to improve the *Statesman*'s problematic numbers is difficult to say. Under Kingsley Martin, who served as editor from the 1930s until 1960, its circulation approached 100,000. Nowadays, in competition with the Sunday agenda pages and the blogosphere, it hovers in the low twenties. Nevertheless, the week I was there Kempfner's claim that the head of the BBC was about to lose his job seemed to be on the front pages of all the London dailies. If that is a harbinger of things to come—the *Statesman* monitoring and, where necessary, hectoring the major media—let's hope it's the ticket to success in the tradition of independence. As Martin once said, when the majority of the press agree on the orthodoxy of the day—be it the war, the BBC or whatever—the time has come to say, "Oh yeah?"

George, on the other hand, was at the mercy of a conglomerate, and conglomerates think like, well, conglomerates.

Prospect's prospects are, in my view, enhanced by its status as an independent journal. I say this despite the fact that it cel-

CALVIN TRILLIN

ANOTHER MIRACLE FROM BILL FRIST

(Wherein the doctor who proved himself a master of distant diagnosis in the Terri Schiavo case offers a succinct explanation of why he ordered his "totally blind" trust to dump his holdings in the family healthcare company just before the stock dropped.)

I followed rules on conflict with such care
That I sold stock I didn't know was there.

(Whereupon his blind trust is examined by some law professors with ophthalmological training.)

This patient's sight shows some improvement,
Detecting shapes of market movement.

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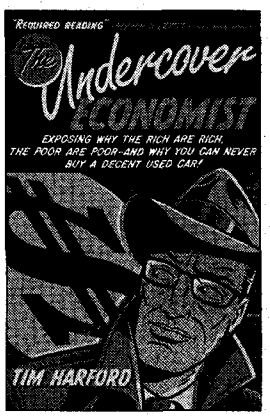
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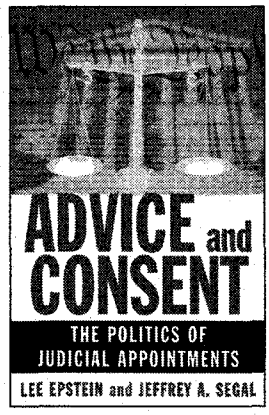

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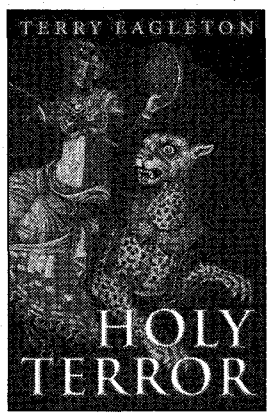

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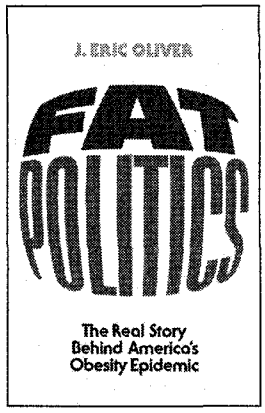

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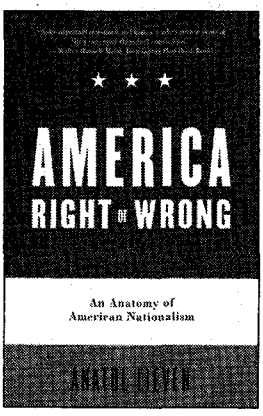

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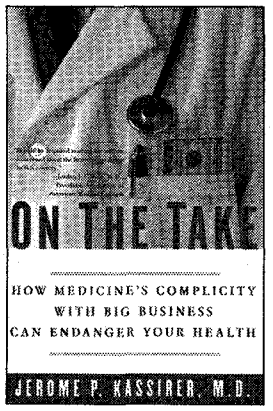

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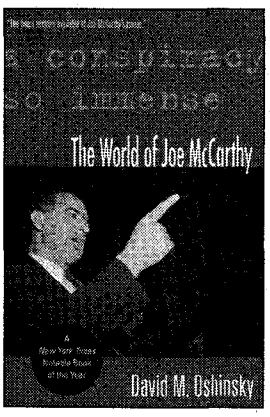

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COMMENT

ebrates its tenth anniversary by playing into the celebrity culture, featuring the world's "Top 100 Public Intellectuals." My objection to such games is only slightly mitigated by the fact that our own Naomi Klein is high on the list (which, by the way, also includes Noam Chomsky as the top vote getter, Jürgen Habermas and Christopher Hitchens.)

The late Neil Postman, who was on the editorial board of this magazine, anticipated this Las Vegas-ization of our culture when he wrote in his 1985 book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* that the ideas of Aldous Huxley were prevailing over those of George Orwell: While Orwell feared those who would ban books, Huxley feared that "there would be no reason to ban a book for there would be no one who would want to read one."

Having said that, I remain a cultural optimist, at least where journals of opinion are concerned, and here's why. I hold in my hands the thirtieth-anniversary issue of *The Boston Review*, which has done more than its share to help set the standard for public discourse. If you don't believe me, send $20 to *Boston Review*, 30 Wadsworth Street, Ste. 407, Cambridge, MA 02139, ask to begin your sub with the anniversary issue and you'll see what I mean. Seamus Heaney, for example, tells how as a Catholic school boy he received in a food parcel from home a dark blue linen-bound edition of T.S. Eliot's poems. It had about it an air of "contraband," for reasons he explains in his essay on his literary awakening.

The other day the mails brought the latest issue of *Jewish Currents* (circulation ca 16,000), on the brink of its sixtieth birthday. The late Morris Schappes, who died almost two years ago at age 97, was to *Jewish Currents* what Goodheart hopes to be to *Prospect* and JFK Jr. had in mind being for *George*. So in this age of mergers and entertainment conglomerates, instead of being swallowed by one of the big boys, the post-Schappes *Jewish Currents* joined forces with The Workmen's Circle, whose members now receive the magazine as a membership benefit. The Workmen's Circle, entering its 105th year, is, like *Jewish Currents*, committed to conservative political and cultural activities, radical secular Jewishness and opposition to anti-Semitism and prejudice.

I suspect both magazines will be around for a long time, not least because they pay attention to the little things. A recent issue reported that because of an error at the bindery, some copies of the July/August issue were mailed with pages missing and other pages appearing in duplicate. "If your copy was *ongepatshket* (messed up) please contact our offices." VICTOR NAVASKY

Victor Navasky, publisher of The Nation, *is the author of* A Matter of Opinion *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux), his latest book. He recently went to London to celebrate its publication there by the New Press.*

In Fact . . .

ROSA PARKS, 1913–2005

■ Bruce Shapiro writes: Rosa Parks's bold refusal to sit in the colored section of a Montgomery, Alabama, bus in 1955 ignited the civil rights movement not because her protest was singular but because it was strategic: Coming a year after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the bus boycott moved the demand for desegregation from the courtroom to the streets. It's useful for myth-making to describe Parks as a weary department-store seamstress who simply took a stand. But actually she was a dedicated activist, secretary of the Montgomery NAACP and schooled at the Highlander Center in Tennessee, a central meeting point for the South's labor and desegregation movements. Her protest took courage, but her courage steered her into a movement, not a solitary gesture. And when Jesse Jackson said that Parks "sat down in order that we might stand up," he was talking not just of legal precedent but of pride. Rosa Parks, great-grandchild of a black slave and a white plantation owner, redeemed America's Constitution and showed civil disobedience as the road to equality under law. She was a revolutionary.

THE NEW FED HEAD

■ William Greider on Ben Bernanke, who was named to succeed Alan Greenspan as Federal Reserve chair: He should seem quite charming to people because he is fluent in English, but as Fed chair, Bernanke might abandon the habit of saying clearly what he means once he encounters the irrational upsets of financial markets. Style aside, Bernanke worships at the same church of hard money as Greenspan. He spent the past few months interning at the White House as chair of the President's Council of Economic Advisers and presumably passed muster as reliably Republican in his views. Still, the GOP may regret the choice if Bernanke sticks to his convictions. As Fed governor he advocated that the Fed publish an explicit target for price inflation. An inflation target would handcuff the Federal Reserve to the bond market's very conservative expectations, and that could produce slower economic growth than necessary. This inflexibility is not good for the folks, nor for political incumbents. Even Greenspan thought the idea was too conservative.

MINORITY/MAJORITY

■ **Permanent Minority.** Clintonites Elaine Kamarck and William Galston published yet another in a series of self-serving reports demanding that Democrats abandon their base, move to the so-called center and appeal to "swing voters." The move reinforced dishonest stereotypes of the center as being far to the right of where it actually is and served as a stimulus for right-wing publications like the *Washington Times* to push the Democratic Party to be yet more conservative.

■ **Toward the Majority.** Every Senate Democrat (except two who were absent) voted for Senator Ted Kennedy's proposal to raise the minimum wage; all but three Republicans voted against it. The unity draws a clear contrast between Democrats and Republicans on this critical economic issue.

—DAVID SIROTA

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Final Days: Only 39 Months to Go

We have to go back to the early 1970s to find rubble so satisfactorily piled up around our imperial government. In fact, when the bodies are counted, the collapse in Nixon's second term may well pale in comparison to the *Götterdämmerung* of the Bush dynasty.

In Nixon's case, top officials and aides forced into resignation, and in many cases prison, included the Vice President, the head of the FBI, two attorneys general and four senior White House staffers.

On March 1, 1974, a grand jury named President Nixon, among others, as an unindicted co-conspirator, for obstructing justice by suppression of evidence such as the White House tapes. In August of that year Nixon resigned.

Yes, it was quite a holocaust at the top executive level. But many imperial institutions sailed through the crisis unimpaired, supposedly ennobled by it. Kissinger's sway over State Department and Empire was enhanced.

The Supreme Court sailed on, led by Nixon's chosen instrument, Warren Burger. Both the Senate and House of Representatives gained a heroic aura as the TV cameras turned Sam Ervin and even Howard Baker into saviors of the Republic. The Democratic Party emerged with credit and huge majorities in November 1974. Most of all, the Fourth Estate was anointed (mostly by itself) as the vanquisher of despotism.

Contrast this to the inferno that now threatens the Imperial Establishment on every front. Since Nixon-time the Republic has had thirty-one years to run to seed—fatter and more corrupt. Already the most powerful politician in Washington, House majority leader Tom DeLay, is under indictment and in consequence stripped of his official position. The future looks grim for Senator Bill Frist, who faces SEC and Justice Department probes for insider trading.

On Capitol Hill there's open warfare among various factions of the Republican Party, focused for now on Bush's nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court. With midterm elections looming and Bush's approval ratings tumbling, the collapse of discipline will only accelerate amid the general panic.

The Bush high command is in utter disrepute, openly attacked by Colin Powell's former chief of staff, Lawrence Wilkerson, as a dictatorial "cabal." The Plame scandal has threatened to take out the whole of Vice President Cheney's senior staff and to have the Vice President himself named as unindicted co-conspirator. Bush's deputy chief of staff, Karl Rove, is in serious trouble, less and less able to counsel his boss, whose presidency hangs over the precipice of total ruin.

Consider the gloomy vista from Bush the Unlucky's Oval Office, where even the birds in the Rose Garden are omens of yet another national crisis (scheduled to provide another bonanza for the drug companies, which a Senate subcommittee just voted to hold free of any liability if their flu vaccines have the same lethal potential they did in the days of the swine flu).

In Iraq the war is faring disastrously and stateside it's increasingly unpopular. In the Homeland the hurricanes have blown away all remaining public illusions masking the venality of the President and his associates. The economy is rickety and a long-feared end to the housing boom may be upon us. Symbolizing the growing sense that the jig is up, Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan is heading into retirement just before the roof falls in.

Internationally, the United States has rarely been more despised. The armed forces are demoralized and the reserve system, in ruins.

Is there any institution not compromised, not held in popular contempt? This crisis has no Woodward or Bernstein to lend it luster. The journalist's name on every lip is that of Judith Miller, tagged as co-conspirator in the fomentation of a war that has seen the deaths of 2,000 Americans thus far. The *New York Times* is in a state of civil war, just like the Republican Party.

There's no sign that the Democratic Party is gaining any traction from the Republican collapse. With good reason. Never has a party been offered so many opportunities and taken so little advantage from them. So far as the war is concerned, powerful Democrats like Joseph Biden and Hillary Clinton are calling for more troops.

In 2005 it is impossible to link the Democrats with a single courageous stand or even constructive idea. In October the party's top strategists—mesmerized by the twenty-first century's answer to the Framers, George Lakoff's childish nostrums—were wrangling over two possible slogans: "Together, we can do better" and "Together, America can do better."

Meanwhile, more than 100,000 older Americans lined up in mid-October to file for bankruptcy before the old wipe-the-slate-clean Chapter 7 law expired. Over half of these bankrupts have been ruined by health costs. The new bankruptcy law, written by the banks and credit card companies, made it through Congress only with the help of Democratic votes in the Senate, which were duly forthcoming, as they always are.

If a Democrat, John Kerry, had captured the White House in 2004, would it have made a difference? Yes. The imperial machine would probably be running more smoothly. The war in Iraq would have been given a new infusion of malign energy. You doubt this? Listen to Professor Juan Cole, liberal Democratic guru on Iraq. It's hard to keep up with his somersaults, but Cole says to The Nation Institute's Tom Engelhardt that for the United States to "up and leave" Iraq would be to become an accomplice to genocide. He counsels the heightened use in Iraq of "special forces and air power." In other words, assassinations and saturation bombing. Come home, Robert McNamara, all is—yet again—forgiven.

It's not the role of radicals to call for the election of a more efficient strategist and engineer of a bloodthirsty and rapacious empire, Kerry's only claim on the voters' attention anyone remembers. So let us give thanks that Bush is in the White House, and holding the imperial fleet on a steady course to the rocks. ■

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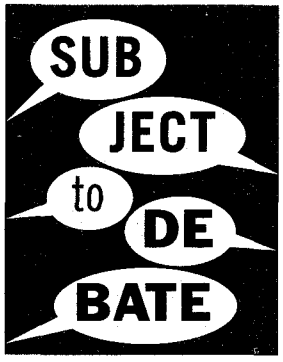
KATHA POLLITT

Madam President, Madam President

I can't help it. I love *Commander in Chief.* Sure, it's cheesy and underwritten and not as good as *The West Wing*. More story lines, please! More characters! More witty banter and moral ambiguity and multiple crises all coming to a head at the same time! But in a TV season in which the major network roles for women over 30 are as desperate housewives in size 0 stretch pants, this feminist fantasy about the first woman President gives me a thrill every Tuesday night at 9. Maybe there's more to life than Wisteria Lane, after all. I love Geena Davis as President Mackenzie "Mac" Allen, so unflappable and warm and confident and kind and clever, to say nothing of gorgeous and six feet tall. But then I've loved Geena Davis ever since she wrote a letter to *Newsweek*, at the height of the "date rape hype" hysteria, pointing out that speaking out against rape wasn't embracing the role of victim but rejecting it. *Commander in Chief* makes you realize how rarely on TV you get to see a woman in charge who isn't a dragon or a bundle of nerves—or a likable one who isn't incompetent, clumsy, silly or self-hating. Imagine, the show's been on since September 27, and Mac hasn't—yet—dissolved into a puddle of tears from the stress of running the free world while raising three kids and foiling the plots of sexist Republican Speaker of the House Nathan Templeton, played with delicious malice by Donald Sutherland.



Even more amazing, her husband, Rod Calloway (Kyle Secor), isn't sulking and acting out, even though one of Mac's first official acts when she moved up from being Vice President was to fire him as her Chief of Staff because otherwise people would assume he was running the show. He takes being First Gentleman with a sense of humor, pitches in equally with the kids and still wants to have sex. More miraculous still, so does Mac. Well, I said it was a fantasy. (Update: Looks like trouble is brewing in paradise. Sigh.)

Pundits wonder out loud if *Commander in Chief* will pave the way for a real-life woman President, like—oh let's just pick a name out of a hat—Hillary Clinton. Far be it from me to suggest that TV dramas don't affect Americans' real-life attitudes—I'd never even heard of cosmopolitans before *Sex and the City* and now I drink them all the time. The show may persuade some voters that it would be cool to have a woman President—"Madam President" has a nice ring to it. But it's unlikely to reach the gender-prejudiced. The substantial minority of voters who, according to polls, wouldn't vote for a woman nominated by their own party probably aren't watching the show, and besides, they're most likely Republicans (20 percent, versus 7 percent of Democrats) who would sooner admit the Earth is more than 10,000 years old than vote for Hillary. Mac Allen, moreover, is so androgynously terrific—even her name is unisex—she's less like a real woman politician than like one of Shakespeare's cross-dressing heroines—Rosalind, or Portia. It's hard to think of a woman within a thousand miles of the White House she doesn't make look frumpy and fussy and old and short.

But then, Mac isn't a politician—she doesn't even belong to a political party. She's an idealistic ex-Congresswoman turned academic who rather improbably accepted the vice presidential slot on the Republican ticket, despite being a liberal and understanding that she was there to win women's votes. So little interested is Mac in power that she's all set to heed the President's dying wish and step aside so Templeton can take over—the Speaker of the House is next in line of succession, a fact that must brighten Denny Hastert's life considerably. But then Templeton makes one coarse, woman-hating remark too many and next thing you know, President Allen is sending in the Navy to rescue a Nigerian woman scheduled to be stoned for sex out of wedlock, sending in the Air Force to restore democracy to an unnamed Latin American country by threatening to destroy its coca crop, and using her summit meeting with the arrogant and sexist Russian president to win freedom for imprisoned dissident journalists. Can a woman be tough enough to lead the free world? Take that, misogynists and drug lords and enemies of free speech! In future episodes Mac will capture Osama bin Laden, rewrite the Iraqi Constitution and raise SAT scores by 75 points—all while dealing with a sullen teenage daughter who wishes Pat Buchanan had her mother's job.

There's a lot of paint-by-numbers feel-good feminism here: See Mac cope when her younger daughter spills juice on the presidential blouse just before she addresses the nation; see Mac and the former First Lady bond over the old joke about how if Moses had been a woman she would have asked for directions and been in Israel in a week; see Mac elegantly trump man after man who makes the mistake of talking down to her. I'm not happy about the show's penchant for calling out the troops, but feel-good feminism? I'll take it. In the real world, after all, it's hard to read the paper without coming across a Larry Summers sound-alike. "Women don't make it to the top because they don't deserve to," top British advertising executive Neil French told a posh Toronto audience in October. "They're crap." French went on to call women "wimps" who inevitably "go suckle something." (Interestingly, the *New York Times* made no mention of the crude language in its report.) French resigned but that didn't stop Brit celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay from announcing that "the girls" these days "can't cook to save their lives." Harriet Miers is ridiculed for her eyeliner, her thank-you notes and her lack of hot dates, and attacked as a mediocrity—which she is, but I don't want to hear about it from people who think Clarence Thomas is a brilliant jurist. New data showing that in Minnesota women now get more academic degrees than men at every level is reported as a problem, not just for men but for women. Whom will they marry, poor overeducated dears? Funny how no one worried about marriage when the numbers went the other way.

As the backlash gets daily more open and absurd, our real-life female politicians seem paralyzed. It's up to television now: Run, Geena, run! ■

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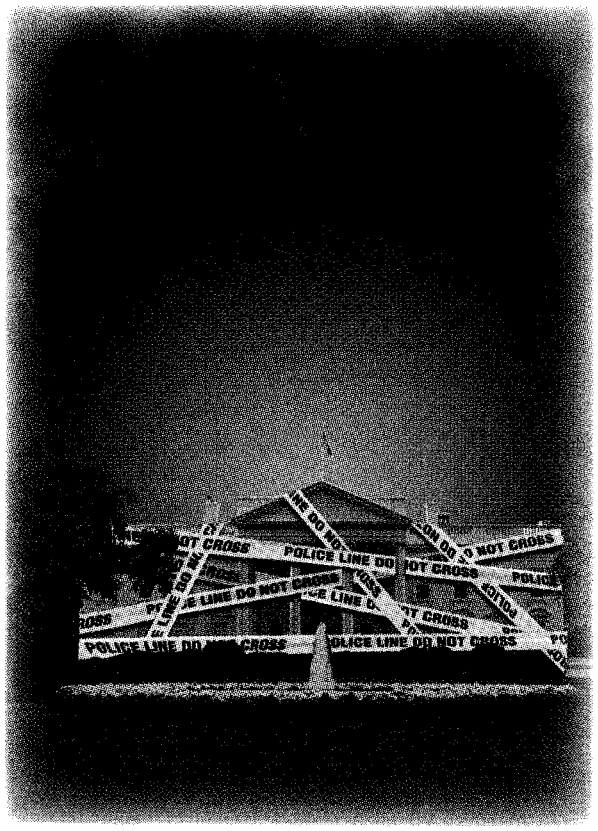
ARTICLES

THE WHITE HOUSE CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY

Legally, there are no significant differences between the investor fraud perpetrated by Enron CEO Ken Lay and the prewar intelligence fraud perpetrated by George W. Bush. Both involved persons in authority who used half-truths and recklessly false statements to manipulate people who trusted them. There is, however, a practical difference: The presidential fraud is wider in scope and far graver in its consequences than the Enron fraud. Yet thus far the public seems paralyzed.

In response to the outcry raised by Enron and other scandals, Congress passed the Corporate Corruption Bill, which President Bush signed on July 30, 2002, amid great fanfare. Bush declared that he was signing the bill because of his strong belief that corporate officers must be straightforward and honest. If they were not, he said, they would be held accountable.



ELIZABETH DE LA VEGA

Ironically, the day Bush signed the Corporate Corruption Bill, he and his aides were enmeshed in an orchestrated campaign to trick the country into taking the biggest risk imaginable—a war. Indeed, plans to attack Iraq were already in motion. In June Bush announced his "new" pre-emptive strike strategy. On July 23, 2002, the head of British intelligence advised Prime Minister Tony Blair, in the then-secret Downing Street Memo, that "military action was now seen as inevitable" and that "intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy." Bush had also authorized the transfer of $700 million from Afghanistan war funds to prepare for an invasion of Iraq. Yet all the while, with the sincerity of Marc Antony protesting that "Brutus is an honorable man," Bush insisted he wanted peace.

Americans may have been unaware of this deceit then, but they have since learned the truth. According to a *Washington Post*/ABC News poll conducted in June, 52 percent of Americans now believe the President deliberately distorted intelligence to make a case for war. In an Ipsos Public Affairs poll, commissioned by AfterDowningStreet.org and completed October 9, 50 percent said that if Bush lied about his reasons for going to war Congress should consider impeaching him. The President's deceit is not only an abuse of power; it is a federal crime. Specifically, it is a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371, which prohibits conspiracies to defraud the United States.

So what do citizens do? First, they must insist that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence complete Phase II of its investigation, which was to be an analysis of whether the Administration manipulated or misrepresented prewar intelligence. The focus of Phase II was to determine whether the Administration misrepresented the information it received about Iraq from intelligence agencies. Second, we need to convince Congress to demand that the Justice Department appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the Administration's deceptions about the war, using the same mechanism that led to the appointment of Patrick Fitzgerald to investigate the outing of Valerie Plame. (As it happens, Congressman Jerrold Nadler and others have recently written to Acting Deputy Attorney General Robert McCallum Jr. pointing out that the Plame leak is just the "tip of the iceberg" and asking that Fitzgerald's authority be expanded to include an investigation into whether the White House conspired to mislead the country into war.)

Third, we can no longer shrink from the prospect of impeachment. Impeachment would require, as John Bonifaz, constitutional attorney, author of *Warrior-King: The Case for Impeaching George Bush* and co-founder of AfterDowningStreet.org, has explained, that the House pass a "resolution of inquiry or impeachment calling on the Judiciary Committee to launch an investigation into whether grounds exist for the House to exercise its constitutional power to impeach George W. Bush." If the committee found such grounds, it would draft articles of impeachment and submit them to the full House for a vote. If those articles passed, the President would be tried by the Senate. Resolutions of inquiry, such as already have been introduced by Representatives Barbara Lee and Dennis Kucinich demanding that the Administration produce key information about its decision-making, could also lead to impeachment.

These three actions can be called for simultaneously. Obviously we face a GOP-dominated House and Senate, but the same outrage that led the public to demand action against

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corporate law-breakers should be harnessed behind an outcry against government law-breakers. As we now know, it was not a failure of intelligence that led us to war. It was a deliberate distortion of intelligence by the Bush Administration. But it is a failure of courage, on the part of Congress (with notable exceptions) and the mainstream media, that seems to have left us helpless to address this crime. Speaking as a former federal prosecutor, I offer the following legal analysis to encourage people to press their representatives to act.

The Nature of the Conspiracy

The Supreme Court has defined the phrase "conspiracy to defraud the United States" as "to interfere with, impede or obstruct a lawful government function by deceit, craft or trickery, or at least by means that are dishonest." In criminal law, a conspiracy is an agreement "between two or more persons" to follow a course of conduct that, if completed, would constitute a crime. The agreement doesn't have to be express; most conspiracies are proved through evidence of concerted action. But government officials are expected to act in concert. So proof that they were conspiring requires a comparison of their public conduct and statements with their conduct and statements behind the scenes. A pattern of double-dealing proves a criminal conspiracy.

The concept of interfering with a lawful government function is best explained by reference to two well-known cases where courts found that executive branch officials had defrauded the United States by abusing their power for personal or political reasons.

One is the Watergate case, where a federal district court held that Nixon's Chief of Staff, H.R. Haldeman, and his crew had interfered with the lawful government functions of the CIA and the FBI by causing the CIA to intervene in the FBI's investigation into the burglary of Democratic Party headquarters. The other is *U.S. v. North*, where the court found that Reagan Administration National Security Adviser John Poindexter, Poindexter's aide Oliver North and others had interfered with Congress's lawful power to oversee foreign affairs by lying about secret arms deals during Congressional hearings into the Iran/*contra* scandal.

Finally, "fraud" is broadly defined to include half-truths, omissions or misrepresentation; in other words, statements that are intentionally misleading, even if literally true. Fraud also includes making statements with "reckless indifference" to their truth.

Conspiracies to defraud usually begin with a goal that is not in and of itself illegal. In this instance the goal was to invade Iraq. It is possible that the Bush team thought this goal was laudable and likely to succeed. It's also possible that they never formally agreed to defraud the public in order to attain it. But when they chose to overcome anticipated or actual opposition to their plan by concealing information and lying, they began a conspiracy to defraud—because, as juries are instructed, "no amount of belief in the ultimate success of a scheme will justify baseless, false or reckless misstatements."

From the fall of 2001 to at least March 2003, the following officials, and others, made hundreds of false assertions in speeches, on television, at the United Nations, to foreign leaders and to Congress: President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his Under Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz. Their statements were remarkably consistent and consistently false.

Even worse, these falsehoods were made against an overarching deception: that Iraq was involved in the 9/11 attacks. If Administration officials never quite said there was a link, they conveyed the message brilliantly by mentioning 9/11 and Iraq together incessantly—just as beer commercials depict guys drinking beer with gorgeous women to imply a link between beer drinking and attractive women that is equally nonexistent. Beer commercials might be innocuous, but a deceptive ad campaign from the Oval Office is not, especially one designed to sell a war in which 2,000 Americans and tens of thousands of Iraqis have died, and that has cost this country more than $200 billion so far and stirred up worldwide enmity.

The fifteen-month PR blitz conducted by the White House was a massive fraud designed to trick the public into accepting a goal that Bush's advisers had held even before the election. A strategy document Dick Cheney commissioned from the Project for a New American Century, written in September 2000, for example, asserts that "the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein." But, as the document reflects, the Administration hawks knew the public would not agree to an attack against Iraq unless there were a "catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor."

Not surprisingly, the Bush/Cheney campaign did not trumpet this strategy. Instead, like corporate officials keeping two sets of books, they presented a nearly opposite public stance, decrying nation-building and acting as if "we were an imperialist power," in Cheney's words. Perhaps the public accepts deceitful campaign oratory, but nevertheless such duplicity is the stuff of fraud. And Bush and Cheney carried on with it seamlessly after the election.

By now it's no secret that the Bush Administration used the 9/11 attacks as a pretext to promote its war. They began talking privately about invading Iraq immediately after 9/11 but did not argue their case honestly to the American people. Instead, they began looking for evidence to make a case the public would accept—that Iraq posed an imminent threat. Unfortunately for them, there wasn't much.

In fact, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) in effect as of December 2001 said that Iraq did not have nuclear weapons; was not trying to get them; and did not appear to have reconstituted its nuclear weapons program since the UN and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors departed in December 1998. This assessment had been unchanged for three years.

As has been widely reported, the NIE is a classified assessment prepared under the CIA's direction, but only after input from the entire intelligence community, or IC. If there is dis-

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Elizabeth de la Vega is a former federal prosecutor with more than twenty years' experience. During her tenure she was a member of the Organized Crime Strike Force and chief of the San José branch of the US Attorney's Office for the Northern District of California. This article is being shared with TomDispatch.com.

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agreement, the dissenting views are also included. The December 2001 NIE contained no dissents about Iraq. In other words, the assessment privately available to Bush Administration officials from the time they began their tattoo for war until October 2002, when a new NIE was produced, was unanimous: Iraq did not have nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons programs. But publicly, the Bush team presented a starkly different picture.

In his January 2002 State of the Union address, for example, Bush declared that Iraq presented a "grave and growing danger," a direct contradiction of the prevailing NIE. Cheney continued the warnings in the ensuing months, claiming that Iraq was allied with Al Qaeda, possessed biological and chemical weapons and would soon have nuclear weapons. These false alarms were accompanied by the message that in the "post-9/11 world," normal rules of governmental procedure should not apply.

Unbeknownst to the public, after 9/11 Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith had created a secret Pentagon unit called the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group (CTEG), which ignored the NIE and "re-evaluated" previously gathered raw intelligence on Iraq. It also ignored established analytical procedure. No responsible person, for example, would decide an important issue based on third-hand information from an uncorroborated source of unknown reliability. Imagine your doctor saying, "Well, I haven't exactly looked at your charts or X-rays, but my friend Martin over at General Hospital told me a new guy named Radar thinks you need triple bypass surgery. So—when are you available?"

Yet that was the quality of information Bush Administration officials used for their arguments. As if picking peanuts out of a Cracker Jacks box, they plucked favorable tidbits from reports previously rejected as unreliable, presented them as certainties and then used these "facts" to make their case.

Nothing exemplifies this recklessness better than the story of lead 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta. On December 9, 2001, Cheney said it was "pretty well confirmed" that Atta had met the head of Iraqi intelligence in Prague in April 2001. In fact, the IC regarded that story, which was based on the uncorroborated statement of a salesman who had seen Atta's photo in the newspaper, as glaringly unreliable. Yet Bush officials used it to "prove" a link between Iraq and 9/11, long after the story had been definitively disproved.

But by August 2002, despite the Administration's efforts, public and Congressional support for the war was waning. So Chief of Staff Andrew Card organized the White House Iraq Group, of which Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove was a member, to market the war.

The Conspiracy Is Under Way

The PR campaign intensified Sunday, September 8. On that day the *New York Times* quoted anonymous "officials" who said Iraq sought to buy aluminum tubes suitable for centrifuges used in uranium enrichment. The same morning, in a choreographed performance worthy of *Riverdance*, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, Condoleezza Rice and Gen. Richard Myers said on separate talk shows that the aluminum tubes, suitable only for centrifuges, proved Iraq's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

If, as Jonathan Schell put it, the allegation that Iraq tried to purchase uranium from Niger is "one of the most rebutted claims in history," the tubes story is a close second. The CIA and the Energy Department had been debating the issue since 2001. And the Energy Department's clear opinion was that the tubes were not suited for use in centrifuges; they were probably intended for military rockets. Given the lengthy debate and the importance of the tubes, it's impossible to believe that the Bush team was unaware of the nuclear experts' position. So when Bush officials said that the tubes were "only really suited" for centrifuge programs, they were committing fraud, either by lying outright or by making recklessly false statements.

When in September 2002 Bush began seeking Congressional authorization to use force, based on assertions that were unsupported by the National Intelligence Estimate, Democratic senators demanded that a new NIE be assembled. Astonishingly, though most NIEs require six months' preparation, the October NIE took two weeks. This haste resulted from Bush's insistence that Iraq presented an urgent threat, which was, after all, what the NIE was designed to assess. In other words, even the imposition of an artificially foreshortened time limit was fraudulent.

Also, the CIA was obviously aware of the Administration's dissatisfaction with the December 2001 NIE. So with little new intelligence, it now maintained that "most agencies" believed Baghdad had begun reconstituting its nuclear weapons programs in 1998. It also skewed underlying details in the NIE to exaggerate the threat.

The October NIE was poorly prepared—and flawed. But it was flawed in favor of the Administration, which took that skewed assessment and misrepresented it further in the only documents that were available to the public. The ninety-page classified NIE was delivered to Congress at 10 PM on October 1, the night before Senate hearings were to begin. But members could look at it only under tight security on-site. They could not take a copy with them for review. They could, however, remove for review a simultaneously released white paper, a glitzy twenty-five-page brochure that purported to be the unclassified summary of the NIE. This document, which was released to the public, became the talking points for war. And it was completely misleading. It mentioned no dissents; it removed qualifiers and even added language to distort the severity of the threat. Several senators requested declassification of the full-length version so they could reveal to the public those dissents and qualifiers and unsubstantiated additions, but their request was denied. Consequently, they could not use many of the specifics from the October NIE to explain their opposition to war without revealing classified information.

The aluminum tubes issue is illustrative. The classified October NIE included the State and Energy departments' dissents about the intended use of the tubes. Yet the declassified white paper mentioned no disagreement. So Bush in his October 7 speech and his 2003 State of the Union address, and Powell speaking to the United Nations February 5, 2003, could claim as "fact" that Iraq was buying aluminum tubes suitable only for centrifuge programs, without fear of contradiction—at least by members of Congress.

Ironically, Bush's key defense against charges of intentional

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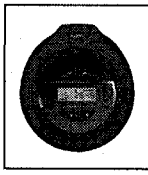

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misrepresentation actually incriminates him further. As Bob Woodward reported in his book *Plan of Attack*, Tenet said that the case for Iraq's possession of nuclear weapons was a "slam dunk" in response to Bush's question, "This is the best we've got?" Obviously, then, Bush himself thought the evidence was weak. But he did not investigate further or correct past misstatements. Instead, knowing that his claims were unsupported, he continued to assert that Iraq posed an urgent threat and was aggressively pursuing nuclear weapons. That is fraud.

It can hardly be disputed, finally, that the Bush Administration's intentional misrepresentations were designed to interfere with the lawful governmental function of Congress. They presented a complex deceit about Iraq to both the public and to Congress in order to manipulate Congress into authorizing foreign action. Legally, it doesn't matter whether anyone was deceived, although many were. The focus is on the *perpetrators'* state of mind, not that of those they intentionally set about to mislead.

The evidence shows, then, that from early 2002 to at least March 2003, the President and his aides conspired to defraud the United States by intentionally misrepresenting intelligence about Iraq to persuade Congress to authorize force, thereby interfering with Congress's lawful functions of overseeing foreign affairs and making appropriations, all of which violates Title 18, United States Code, Section 371.

To what standards should we hold our government officials? Certainly standards as high as those Bush articulated for corporate officials. Higher, one would think. The President and Vice President and their appointees take an oath to defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States. If they fail to leave their campaign tactics and deceits behind—if they use the Oval Office to trick the public and Congress into supporting a war—we must hold them accountable. It's not a question of politics. It's a question of law. ■

WILL IRAQ SPLIT APART? PERHAPS. BUT POWERFUL FORCES ARE KEEPING IT TOGETHER.

The Question of Kurdistan

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

Outside the violent city of Mosul lies the last checkpoint of the Kurdish militia, or *peshmerga*. The gunmen control a bridge where the dusty rolling land of the northern Mesopotamian plain tucks itself into a seam along the Al Kazir River. In a few months these fields will be green with winter wheat, but now they are wind-swept, pale and desiccated. The yellow late-afternoon sun casts long shadows.

RYAN INZANA

From a hilltop redoubt, the *peshmerga* watch but do not control three majority-Arab villages clustered along the winding, silted river below. At the bridge they search cars for explosives and weapons and check the identities of Arab drivers headed east from the hell that is Mosul toward the secure enclave of Erbil, the Kurdish capital.

At the checkpoint there is no Iraqi flag flying, only the banner of greater Kurdistan, which nationalists say includes parts of Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. "We are working for the future, not for now. We want an independent Kurdistan. We want to defend our real borders. And we want America to help," says the *peshmerga*'s commanding officer as we sip hot tea and lean into the wake of his desk fan.

All the outward signs at this checkpoint indicate that Kurdish independence is imminent and that Iraq will soon break apart. The new Constitution can also be read as hastening Iraq's end by allowing groups of provinces to create semi-autonomous regions, possible mini-states. Many observers fear this will lead to massive intercommunal war—ending with an oil-rich Kurdistan in the north, an oil-rich Shiite state in the south and a badly wounded, festering Sunni-dominated rump of Iraq in the middle.

Some experts actually argue for such a breakup of Iraq, believing that creating three substates will avoid a wider war. The most prominent advocates of this position are Leslie Gelb of the Council on Foreign Relations and Peter Galbraith, a former US Ambassador to Croatia. Over the summer Galbraith, an adviser to the Kurds who is highly critical of the Bush Administration's Iraq policy, laid out this case in a widely read piece for *The New York Review of Books*. Since then, among the chattering classes of the United States, something like a Galbraithian consensus has developed that sees the "invented" postcolonial nation of Iraq as inevitably headed for disintegration and Kurdistan as already de facto independent.

Yet on the ground in Kurdistan these assumptions begin to fall apart. The region's ties to Iraq are quite strong. At the same time, Kurdistan's internal divisions are surprisingly intense. Just as the Shiites in the south have been fighting among themselves—followers of Sadr versus the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq—so too is the political culture of Kurdistan defined by the fault lines of class, tribe, party and ethnicity; there is no monolithic Kurdish state ready to emerge. Most important, Kurdish leaders are keenly aware that the United States has not given them a green light to seek total independence. The Kurds, landlocked and surrounded by enemies, are candid about not wishing to alienate their new patron, Uncle Sam.

Christian Parenti is the author of The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq, *due out in paperback from the New Press on November 7. Research for this article was supported by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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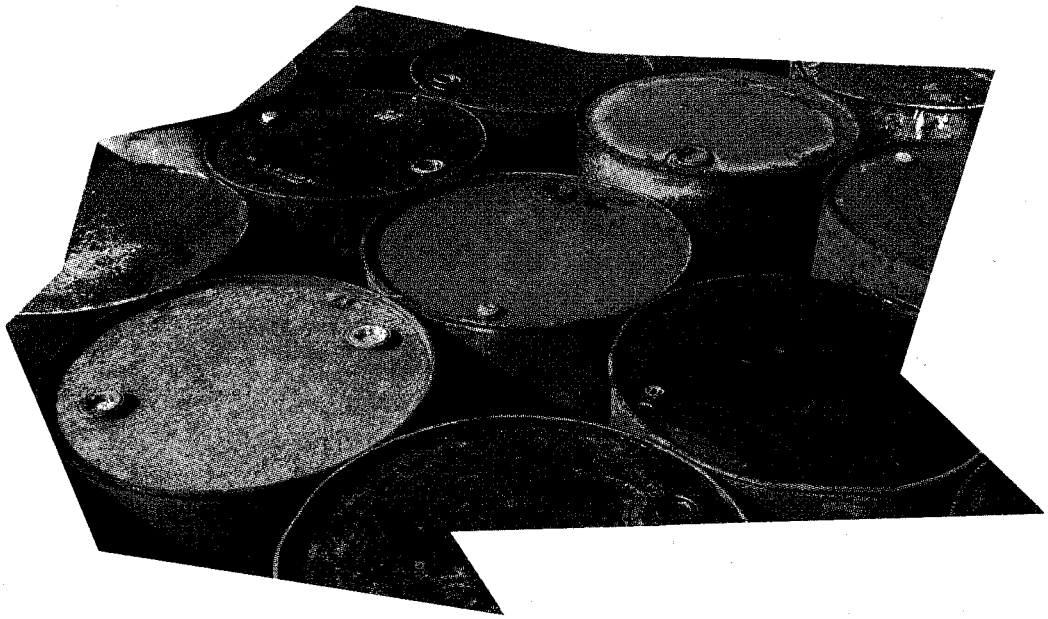

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As the crisis in Iraq deepens, American policy has devolved from bold ideological vision into an ad hoc collection of emergency tactics aimed at containing the spiraling violence that now seriously hampers even basic petroleum production. US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad's frantic last-minute, technically illegal negotiations around the referendum on the new Constitution are a case in point. The compromises he brokered were all designed to keep the pieces together, to stave off greater chaos.

"We [Kurds] are more Iraqi than Saddam Hussein," says Sadi Ahmed Pire, one of the top Kurdish politicians. Pire, sitting in his party's huge fortified Erbil offices, says that all the high-level American generals and advisers he has spoken with "are committed to a united and democratic Iraq."

"In 2003 we could have declared independence," Pire explains. "But we went to Baghdad instead." When pressed, he and other Kurdish politicians note that full independence for their region would most likely be followed by secession of the Shiite-controlled south. And that, everyone acknowledges, would greatly enhance the already considerable power of Iran. Thus, the dream of an independent Kurdistan is held hostage to US fears of growing Iranian influence.

Iraq may be an 'invented' nation, but geography and infrastructure have given that invention economic and physical coherence.

Economics is another important factor keeping Kurdistan in Iraq. As currently constituted, Kurdistan does not have much oil. The Kurdish economy survives almost entirely on oil revenue from the Iraqi central government. With a population of 4 million, the Kurds get an estimated $5 billion from Baghdad annually. The main petroleum deposits of the north are in and around Kirkuk. But Kirkuk is a disputed city, by no means fully controlled by the Kurds and not included in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region. Complicating matters are Kirkuk's large Turkmen and Arab populations. A Kurdish annexation of the city and its environs would not be easy. Without the oilfields of Kirkuk, however, Kurdistan is not economically viable.

Iraq might be an "invented" nation made from three former Ottoman provinces, or *vilayets*, but geography and infrastructure have given that invention considerable economic and physical coherence. Consider the basic contours of trade: Most commodities consumed in Kurdistan are imported, and 70 percent of those arrive via the ports in Aqaba, Jordan, and Basra. Despite the war these goods are shipped by truck along the California-style highways of central and southern Iraq. Kurdish road-links to Iran and Turkey are simply too underdeveloped and clotted by tax-levying militias, mountains and hostile customs officials to reverse this pattern.

Kurdistan is also culturally linked to Iraq by its Turkmen, Assyrian and Arab communities. As one Turkmen activist put it: "We are the cement that holds the pieces together because our people are spread all across Iraq."

Back in Erbil the borderland tensions seem far away. Secret police and uniformed *peshmerga* keep the peace while oil money inflates the economy. Occasionally there are security glitches: The head of the counterterrorism unit in Erbil, Sheikh Zana, for example, was arrested in early summer and revealed to be the head of an Islamic terrorist cell engaged in kidnapping and murder.

More typically, political life in Kurdistan is about power, patronage and corruption. Two secular nationalist parties rule Kurdistan: The western half of the region is controlled by the older, more conservative Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), run by Massoud Barzani, who inherited the party from his father and now monopolizes its key functions with his many Barzani clansmen. In the east the newer, formerly socialist Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Jalal Talabani is in charge. The PUK is the more secular and less clan-oriented of the two, but both groups draw on family and tribal ties and neither has a coherent ideology. A smattering of Islamic, leftist and minority ethnic parties also hold some seats in local and regional government.

From 1994 to 1999 the tension between the KDP and PUK erupted into fratricidal civil war. At its peak, Barzani even brought in Saddam Hussein's troops to overrun Talabani's PUK stronghold in Sulaimaniya. The war left rank-and-file Kurds deeply cynical about Kurdish leadership and organized politics in general.

Now all the important things in Kurdistan come in twos—one for each party. Each party has its own regional Cabinet. All ministries are duplicated. There are two incompatible cell phone systems. Two sets of TV and radio stations, two party-controlled universities. Barzani heads the regional government, while Talabani takes the largely ceremonial post of Iraqi president in Baghdad.

What the parties do share with each other and most of the Iraqi political class is a culture of corruption. As in the rest of Iraq, oil money flows easily while bookkeeping is minimal: According to various audits, between $5 billion and $12 billion in oil revenue has simply gone missing from state coffers. No one really knows how much has been stolen in Kurdistan. But the signs of graft are everywhere.

At the KDP's Ministry of Economics and Administration I met the meek young Bashdar Habib, general director of planning and follow-up. His office has the feel of a tacky hotel suite—plastic flowers, gray-and-pink splatter-patterned wallpaper. There are no books or reports anywhere. He sits at his desk reading the KDP newspaper. He has been here for three months but cannot give me even the most basic or general numbers about the Kurdish economy because no one has given them to him. He has a bachelor's degree in finance and no experience in economic planning.

He is apologetic and takes me to meet the director of finance, the older, more commanding but still quite amateur Rasheed Hassn. In that office the story is the same: Little is happening, no numbers are available. Then there is a business interruption. A clerk has a bill for several hundred thousand dollars from a contractor, and it seems that the firm in question may have already been paid but maybe not. No one is sure. Meanwhile, Barzani's associates are investing huge sums in stadiums, empty shopping malls and luxury housing developments with capital from who knows where. These bizarre, mostly empty trophy projects surround Kurdistan's two headquarter cities, Erbil and Sulaimaniya.

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But this corrupt order—in which clan, party, state and commerce all merge and overlap—is not without benefits for the average Kurd. Vying for the loyalty of common people, the two parties are engaged in a patronage-based cold war in which jobs, houses, pensions, generators, new schools and health clinics are used to win votes, influence and obedience. As one farmer explained it: "Sometimes the parties are judged by how they serve the people."

In the PUK-controlled village of Greda Boor, not far from the area where KDP influence starts, Akran Anwar Karem and his family are winnowing the chaff from seed onion. "We'll plant these again later," he says. Given that Saddam leveled this village during the Anfal campaign of the late 1980s, conditions could be worse. He points out a new school and clinic but complains that the promised electrical lines are a year late. He'd like some fertilizer as well.

If the petroleum-funded patronage system can serve a weird redistributive function, it also has a punitive side.

"We have mud houses that we build ourselves," says Nazwad Muhiadin, who farms cucumbers and tomatoes in a flat, hot KDP-controlled village north of Kirkuk called Sheran. "The KDP built those brick houses for its supporters. When we went to the other party to get a big generator, the KDP threatened to take it from us, so we don't have one."

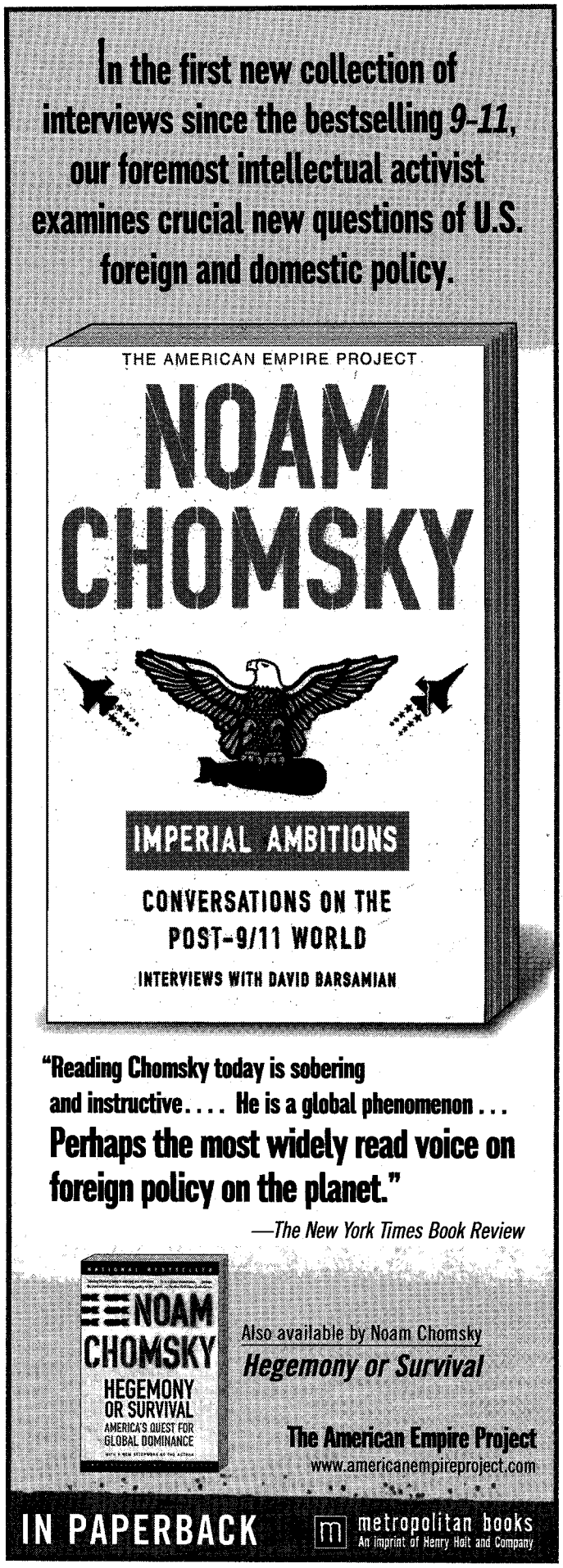
The party patronage system has also served to stall the official Kurdish agenda of neoliberalism—that is to say, the US occupation's program of mass privatization. Despite the free-market bromides mouthed by party hacks, they continue doing things the old-fashioned way. Many of the nonpetroleum sectors of the economy—cigarettes, cement, utilities and carpets—are still state-held. Education and healthcare are free. The government employs 35 percent of the workforce, and 60 percent of the population receives some sort of pension or government assistance. The land reform of the early 1960s has not been rolled back. All of this bolsters the power of the parties. It also means that the region lacks the truly grinding poverty marked by dump scavenging, begging and mass brigandage that plagues much of the global South.

"They declare they are for privatization, but they don't do anything," says a very disappointed Dr. Mihamad Riouf Saeed at Mostansary University in Sulaimaniya. "They don't privatize anything. We have no plan. There are no economic experts in government. So we eat and the administration goes on."

Kawkas is a big man with a wide, scowling face and baggy eyes. He is a *cocher*, a Kurdish nomad, and was named after a common Kurdish tree. He sits cross-legged on a carpet, at the opening of a tent made of woven reed mat walls and a black woolen mesh awning held up in dramatic peaks by six wooden poles. As he talks, Kawkas smokes and drinks tea from a small fluted glass.

Here in this tent is the quintessential heart of Kurdish culture, but the talk is not about nationalist dreams of independence—all Kurds united against Iraq. Instead, the grievances concern other Kurds, the rich and powerful ones.

"This life is like honey mixed with snake poison. It looks like freedom, but we rent this," Kawkas gestures to the rolling fallow cropland where his sheep graze and to the abruptly rising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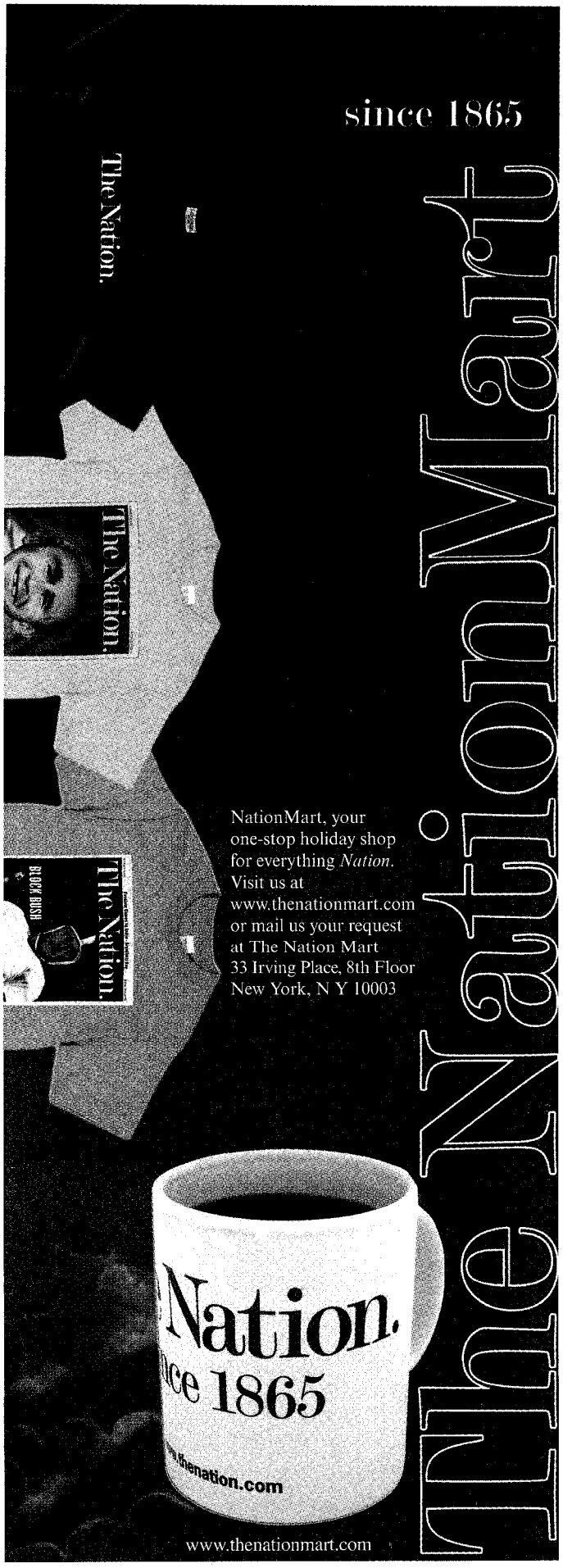
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bare mountains beyond where they grazed a month ago. "Aga, the landlord, controls it all. And the parties, the mayor, they all serve Aga. Aga gives them gifts and they do what he wants."

Kawkas is angry, but the older man who owns the tent where we sit is scared. "Don't say this! Don't talk about these things in front of strangers." We have hit a nerve: class power in the countryside. Kawkas ignores his elder and tradition and continues enumerating his grievances. The old man gets up and starts pacing outside the tent.

Traditionally Kurdistan was controlled by a landlord class, the agas. Sometimes they were clan leaders, but always they were rich men acting as feudal lords, doling out favors, taking tribute, mediating disputes and imposing punishment. After 1958, when General Kassim overthrew the Hashemite monarchy established by the British, an extensive land reform sought to ruin the aga class, but it persisted. Under Saddam the agas ran pro-government Kurdish militias called the Jash, which hunted down and tortured the rebel *peshmerga*. Then pieces of the Jash switched sides. Now the agas are insinuating themselves into the politically confused networks of the KDP and PUK, using their capital and superior education to gain government jobs, party posts and contracts.

Delwer Omar Abu Bakr is the KDP-appointed mayor of Degala, a town up the road from Kawkas's tent. Mayor Delwer, as he is known, is simultaneously suave and defensive; he has the intensity and dark good looks of a movie star and occasionally speaks of himself in the third person. But he won't say much. I appeal to his vanity, telling him he looks younger than 36 and asking him about himself. He smiles and soon, in a cryptic, typically Iraqi fashion, starts to confess.

"In my heart I hate the agas. They fought us," says the mayor, who was a *peshmerga* before studying law. "But they are more intelligent than simple people. They are patient and respectful. Simple people come in dirty and get angry. So the agas are more effective."

The mayor explains that despite formal land reform, some agas still control public pastures as private property and, in contravention of the law, still collect rents on these properties.

On a hill outside Erbil sits a big yellow house with tinted windows, armed security and a commanding view extending over miles of steep barren ridges. Inside lives Aga Adal Abu Shwara ("Adal with big mustache"), and indeed he has a preposterously large handlebar mustache. Under Saddam, Adal headed a Jash unit called the Special Emergency Squad. Everyone seems to know who he is, and they all say the same thing: He was one of Saddam's Kurdish thugs. Now Adal heads a United Nations security detail.

In his plush white-carpeted living room, surrounded by gold-colored drapes, ornate wood-framed couches and a huge plasma TV playing a Kurdish musical gala, Adal Abu Shwara sips Pepsi and explains the traditions of the aga.

"To be an aga is a job. We serve the people. We give people land, we find them jobs. All our cars have chains to help pull people out of ditches after accidents. That is why we built this house close to the road."

Critics charge that the parties use agas to mobilize votes. "Yes, we get the people to vote, but it would be rude for some-

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one in Talabani's area to make his people vote for Barzani or the other way around. So there are limits."

Altun Kopri, located between Kirkuk and an oilfield to the northwest—beyond the formal borders of Kurdistan—has long been a majority Turkmen town with a Turkmen name, but in the past two years it has become majority Kurdish. The town sits mostly on a sloping island in the Little Zab River surrounded by fertile flood plains and sandbars. The population here has almost doubled over these two years as Kurds move down from the north and Turkmen move up from Kirkuk and east from Mosul to escape the escalating violence.

This area around Kirkuk and the oilfields is a demographic battleground. Whether or not the north becomes independent, Kurdish leaders want this terrain under their formal control as part of Iraq's Autonomous Region of Kurdistan. And in preparation for the planned 2007 referendum on Kirkuk's fate, Kurdish militants seem to be creating facts on the ground. Turkmen say that activists from the PUK and KDP are usurping all the civil service jobs and political power. Some charge that the Kurds are busing in people from the north and registering them to vote in Altun Kopri. Regular Kurds on the street and the local KDP deny this.

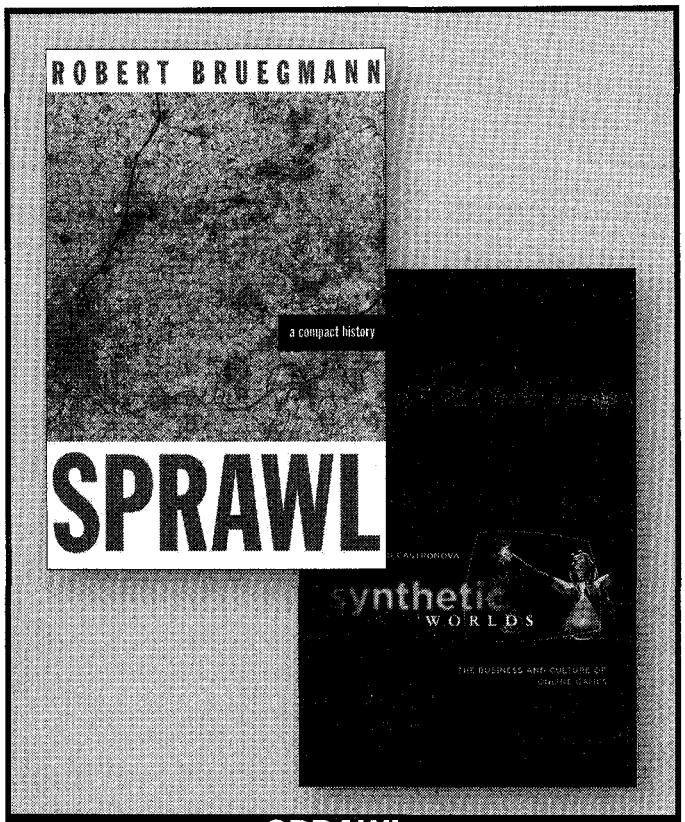
"In Altun Kopri it is only tense, but Kirkuk is a time bomb ready to explode," says Adnan Zada, head of the local Turkmen Front. Despite Zada's claim that "we cannot have weapons because we are a minority," some of his men wear pistols tucked in their belts.

By most measures Kirkuk has already started to explode. A Turkmen house painter named Mohamed Ali (or, as he prefers, Chico) is headed home to Toronto after seeing family in Kirkuk. "There was shooting every night, car bombs. We just stayed inside for ten days," says the distraught Chico. "If I see a fire, am I gonna walk into it? No. I walk away. A lot of Turkmen are leaving." He says two high-ranking Turkmen policemen were assassinated while he was in Kirkuk and that there was one fairly big, unreported car bomb on October 1.

Worst of all for Chico was the night when men in police uniforms kidnapped his cousin and demanded $40,000 in ransom but settled for $20,000. He is convinced the abductors were cops from Sulaimaniya moonlighting as ethnic gangsters in Kirkuk. His brother had a house and a shop seized by armed Kurds. The brother moved to Istanbul, uncompensated.

Arabs are also under pressure in the area around Kirkuk. Just outside Altun Kopri lives Ahmed Hussein Ahmed, a Kurdish farmer who was driven out of his village in the 1980s and returned after the US-led invasion. "The Arabs who were brought here by Saddam are gone now. They knew that it was not their land and left without violence," says Ahmed. He says that several Arab villages around Altun Kopri have been completely abandoned.

These simmering ethnic tensions can be read as a prelude to national breakup or merely as an attempt by the Kurdish parties to accumulate more power and resources within a united Iraq—a violent preparation for the Kirkuk referendum in 2007. But if Turkmen and Arabs start to resist Kurdish political muscle by force and the *peshmerga* in turn escalate, accusing the Arab and Turkmen populations of being insurgents, the simmering violence could boil over into a full-scale



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war in the worst tradition of recent Iraqi history.

"We will use the Saddam plan," says Hameed Afandi, the KDP's Erbil-based minister of *peshmerga* affairs, when offering his solution to Iraq's security dilemmas. A guerrilla fighter since 1961, the lean short-haired chain-smoking Afandi speaks in forceful, heavily accented English as he insists that Kirkuk is Kurdish. His comments offer a glimpse of the possible worst-case scenario: "The Americans are too soft. We will kill terrorists in the middle of the street. We will destroy their houses and kill their families. We would be very hard with them!" ■

THEY HARVEST DOMINICAN BASEBALL TALENT ON THE CHEAP, AND GIVE LITTLE IN RETURN.

Say It Ain't So, Big Leagues

DAVE ZIRIN

In early October 30-year-old Mario Encarnación was found dead in his Taipei, Taiwan, apartment from causes unknown. His lonely death, with the lights on and refrigerator door open, ended a tragic journey that began in the dirt-poor town of Bani in the Dominican Republic and concluded on the other side of the world. In between, Encarnación, or "Super Mario," as he was known on the baseball diamond, was the most highly touted prospect in the Oakland A's organization, considered better than future American League Most Valuable Player Miguel Tejada. Tejada, also from Bani, paid the freight to bring his friend home from Taiwan. It's hard to imagine who else from their barrio could have managed to foot the bill.

RYAN INZANA

Encarnación's death was not even a sidebar in the sports pages of the United States. A 30-year-old playing out his last days in East Asia might as well be invisible.

But he shouldn't be. As Major League Baseball celebrates its annual fall classic, the World Series, it is increasingly dependent on talent born and bred in Latin America. Twenty-six percent of all players in the major leagues now hail from Latin America, including some of the game's most popular stars, like David Ortiz, Pedro Martinez and Sammy Sosa. Leading the way is the tiny nation of the Dominican Republic. Just five years ago there were sixty-six Dominican-born players on baseball's Opening Day rosters. This year, there were more than 100. This means roughly one out of every seven major league players was born in the DR, by far the highest number from any country outside the United States. In addition, 30 percent of players in the US minor leagues hail from this tiny Latin American nation, which shares an island with Haiti and has a population roughly the size of New York City's.

All thirty teams now scout what baseball owners commonly call "the Republic of Baseball," and a number of teams have elaborate multimillion-dollar "baseball academies." The teams trumpet these academies. (One executive said, "We have made Fields of Dreams out of the jungle.") But unmentioned is that for every Tejada there are 100 Encarnacións. And for every Encarnación toiling on the margins of the pro baseball circuit, there are thousands of Dominican players cast aside by a Major League Baseball system that is strip-mining the Dominican Republic for talent. Unmentioned is the overarching relationship Major League Baseball has with the Dominican Republic, harvesting talent on the cheap with no responsibility for who gets left behind. Unmentioned is what Major League Baseball is doing—or is not doing—for a country with 60 percent of its population living below the poverty line. As American sports agent Joe Kehoskie says in *Stealing Home*, a PBS documentary, "Traditionally in the Latin market, I would say players sign for about 5 to 10 cents on the dollar compared to their US counterparts." He also points out that "a lot of times kids just quit school at 10, 11, 12, and play baseball full-time. It's great, it's great for the kids that make it because they become superstars and get millions of dollars in the big leagues. But for ninety-eight kids out of 100, it results in a kid that is 18, 19, with no education."

Considering both the poverty rate and the endless trumpeting of rags-to-riches stories of those like Sosa and Tejada, it's no wonder the academies are so attractive to young Dominicans. Most young athletes in the DR play without shoes, using cut-out milk cartons for gloves, rolled-up cloth for balls, and sticks and branches for bats. The academies offer good equipment, nice uniforms and the dream of a better life.

Sacramento Bee sportswriter Marcos Breton's book *Home Is Everything: The Latino Baseball Story* highlights the appeal of the academies: "Teams house their players in dormitories and feed their prospects balanced meals. Often it's the first time these boys will sleep under clean sheets or eat nutritious meals. The firsts don't stop there: Some of these boys encounter a toilet for the first time. Or an indoor shower. They are taught discipline, the importance of being on time, of following instructions."

The competition to get into the "baseball factories," as they are often referred to, is fierce. Sports anthropologist Alan Klein describes, in *Stealing Home*, the scene in front of one of the academies:

> Every morning you would drive to the Academy, you would see fifteen, twenty kids out there, not one of them had a uniform, they all had pieces of one uniform or another, poor equipment, they would be right at the gate waiting for the security people to

Dave Zirin is the author of What's My Name, Fool? Sports and Resistance in the United States *(Haymarket).*

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open up the gates and they would go in for their tryout. If they got signed, they were happy. If they didn't get signed, it didn't even deter them for a minute; they would be on the road hitchhiking to the next location. And they would eventually find one of those 20-some clubs that would eventually pick them up. And if not, then they might return to amateur baseball.

Yet even the ones who make it through the academy doors often find themselves little more than supporting players in a system designed to help pro teams ferret out the few potential stars. As Roberto González Echevarría, a Cuban baseball historian who also appears in the documentary, says, "I take a dim view of what the major leagues are doing in the Dominican Republic with these so-called baseball academies, where children are being signed at a very early age and not being cared for. Most of them are providing the context for the stars to emerge; if you take 100 baseball players in those academies, or 100 baseball players anywhere, only one of them will play even an inning in the major leagues. The others are there as a supporting cast."

And little is done for those very select few who make it into a major league farm system to protect them from the likely fall to the hard concrete floor of failure.

Brendan Sullivan III, a pitcher who played five seasons for the San Diego Padres, told author Colman McCarthy, "Sure, they were thrilled to have gone from dirt lots to playing in a US stadium before fans and getting paychecks every two weeks. But once a team decides a Dominican won't make it to the big leagues, he is discarded as an unprofitable resource. That's true for US players, but at least they have a high school diploma, and often college, and thus have fallback skills. Most Dominicans don't. They go home to the poverty they came from or try to eke out an existence at menial labor in the States, with nothing left over except tales of their playing days chasing the dream."

Major League Baseball seems unconcerned and uninterested in the situation it has a central role in shaping. Boston Red Sox owner John Henry speaks of the "special relationship Major League Baseball has with the people of the Dominican Republic," but it's unclear whether he believes the Bosox and Major League Baseball have any responsibilities regarding the players they employ and the families left behind.

Al Avila, assistant general manager of the Detroit Tigers, whose father, Ralph, operated the Los Angeles Dodgers' Dominican academy for decades, told ESPN.com, "Baseball is the best way out of poverty for most of these kids and their families. They see on television and read in the newspapers how many of their countrymen have made it. For parents that have kids, they have them playing from early on. The numbers show that the dream is within reach. And even if they don't make it, these Dominican academies house, feed and educate these kids in English. They become acclimated to a new culture, which is always positive. At the very least, even if they don't make it as a player, they could get different doors opened, like becoming a coach."

The question we need to ask is, Does baseball have a broader responsibility to the Dominican Republic and these 10- and 11-year-old kids who think they have a better chance of emerging from desperately poor conditions with a stick and a milk-carton glove than by staying in school? Does the highly profitable Major

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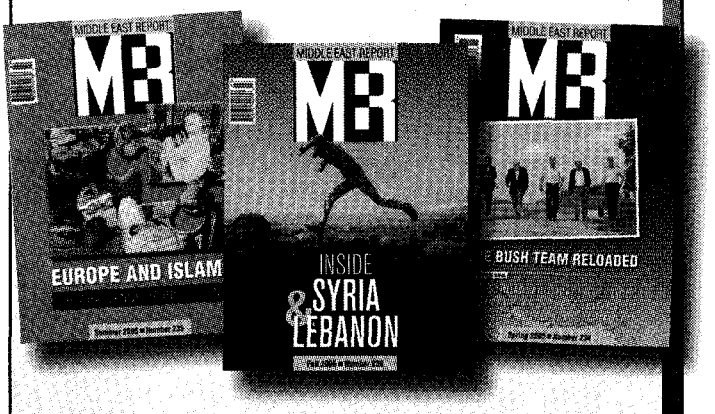

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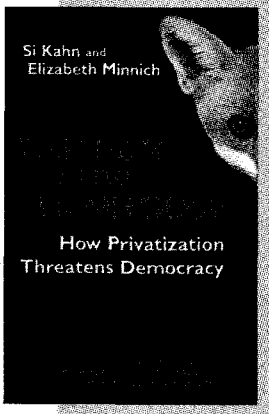

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League Baseball have any responsibility to cushion the crash landing that awaits 99.9 percent of DR kids with big-league dreams, or the 95 percent of players who are good enough to be chosen for the academy but are summarily discarded with nothing but a kick out the door? We can probably surmise where the family and friends of Mario Encarnación fall on this question.

The death of "Super Mario" went unnoticed in the US press with one exception, a heart-wrenching column on October 6 in the *Sacramento Bee* by his friend Marcos Breton, who wrote, "Mario wasn't a warped athlete like we've come to expect in most ballplayers. He was big-hearted, fun-loving, a good friend.... The pressure of succeeding and lifting his family out of poverty was a weight that soon stooped Encarnación's massive shoulders."

Should it have been his responsibility alone to shoulder such a burden? ■

HOW DID LULA'S PARTY OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY BECOME A PARTY OF BRIBERY?

Corruption of Hope in Brazil

HILARY WAINWRIGHT

When Luis Inácio Lula da Silva and the Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) finally came to power in 2002, expectations were high. No one expected the PT government to deliver common ownership of the land overnight. Nor did we expect participatory decision-making along the elegant corridors of Oscar Neimeyer's state buildings in Brasília. At least not immediately. But for many of us on the left, the PT represented something new. With its roots in militant trade unionism, liberation theology, the grassroots movement of the landless and Paulo Freire–style radical pedagogy, it seemed to combine the participatory democracy of social movements with the representative institutions of liberal democracy.

RYAN INZANA

Warning bells began to ring, though, when Lula's government appeared to break the bond at the heart of the PT's original strategy—achieving social justice by strengthening the power of popular movements—by failing to turn its overwhelming electoral mandate into a democratic counterforce capable of driving a hard bargain with the International Monetary Fund. But few *petistas* (as supporters of the PT are known) internationally or in Brazil were ready for the shock of discovering this past May that the party symbolizing to them a breakthrough in democratic socialist politics was governing on the basis of systematic corruption—including bribery to win parliamentary allies and the improper funding of Lula's election campaign. The revelations unraveled after a tape-recorded case of corruption in the Post Office led back to the political appointment of a director from one of the smaller parties in the ruling coalition (the PTB, Partido Trabalhadores Brasileiro) as a deal struck with the PT. The PTB got access to Brazil's notorious system of patronage in return for its votes in Congress. Further revelations came when the PTB's president, angry at being portrayed as a lone villain, revealed the PT had made monthly payments to an unspecified number of federal deputies to insure their support for government legislation.

I'd visited Brazil in more hopeful times to investigate the PT's participatory style in cities like Porto Alegre, and to take part in the World Social Forum, hosted four times by that city's PT government. Recently I returned to find answers to some disturbing questions: What was the nature of corruption in the PT? What was the evidence for it? How had a party of participatory democracy become a party of corruption? Was the whole party infected, or were there just some rotten apples among the leadership?

The exact details are still under investigation by Congress—an investigation hampered by the fact that politicians from all the main parties are implicated in the charges. But it is generally admitted—including by Delúbio Soares, who was forced to resign as party treasurer—that the *cúpula* (group at the top) of the PT bribed political parties and congressmen on the right in order to pass the PT's legislation. (Lula won with 61 percent of the vote, but the PT, though the largest party, still has only a fifth of the seats in Congress.)

The corruption also extended to the PT's own election funds. Investigators revealed a *caixa dois* ("second cash register," or secret slush fund), whose sources included donations from businesses contracted by PT municipal governments, public companies and private companies seeking government contracts. Duda Mendonça, the publicist in charge of Lula's 2002 advertising campaign, says he was paid through an illegal offshore account held by the PT in the Bahamas.

Despite the large sums of money involved, the PT scandal is not about personal greed—though this exists as well—but about the corruption of the party's internal democracy. It is about how a quest for power at any cost perverted the PT's goals and values. This has several roots. Francisco de Oliveira, a Marxist sociologist and a founder of the PT, stresses the context of the Brazilian state, which gives greater powers of patronage to its politicians than possibly any other country in the world, offering huge opportunities for clientelism. As president, Lula has 25,000 jobs to give away. François Mitterrand, by way of contrast, had

Hilary Wainwright's most recent book is Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy *(Verso). Research in Brazil was funded by the New Politics Project of the Transnational Institute (www.tni.org).*

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150. Brazil's electoral system, in which candidates stand not on party lists but as individuals, also makes for weak parties. Patronage and bribery have traditionally been used to get measures through Congress and the assemblies of regional and municipal government, which mirror the presidential system.

The participatory budgeting pioneered by PT governments in Porto Alegre and elsewhere was developed to attack this corrupt system. The idea was that instead of bribery and patronage, the mayor or governor (and, eventually, the president) would govern through a process of shared decision-making (for example, over annual investments in the municipal budget) with new institutions of popular participation rooted in the community. These negotiations would be underpinned by a process of direct and delegate democracy that councilors and regional deputies would be unable to ignore because their voters would be participants.

The Porto Alegre *petistas* I had met in better times confirmed this. "We ruled for sixteen years without bribery," said Uribitan de Souza, an architect of the participatory budget. In Porto Alegre the party also repeatedly won re-election without the aid of expensive spin doctors. Guiding these pioneers was the recognition that electoral success does not, on its own, bring sufficient power even to begin social transformation—but that an electoral victory can be used to activate a deeper popular power. The PT approach, which combined winning elections and working closely with social and trade union movements to develop their power and political consciousness, brought it to the brink of winning the presidency in 1994. After Lula was defeated in the final weeks of the 1994 campaign by Fernando Henrique Cardoso—who manipulated the country's currency, the real, to control inflation and forged a crucial alliance with Globo, Brazil's powerful media monopoly—the leadership of the PT decided that the only way they would ever win was by subordinating everything to electoral politics, hiring the same marketing professionals who'd engineered victories for other political parties and centralizing power in the hands of the São Paulo–based party headquarters.

After Lula's 1994 defeat, the PT's leaders decided that the only way they would ever win was to subordinate everything to electoral politics.

At the center of this strategy, and of the corruption that financed it, was José Dirceu—former guerrilla leader, party president since 1994 and the architect of Lula's election campaigns from 1994 to the victory of 2002. Dirceu's growing power was reinforced by the weakening of militant trade unionism as the forces of the global market ripped into the industrial heartland around São Paulo—the center of the PT's trade union base. This industrial decline strengthened those union leaders, including Lula, whose approach was essentially one of pragmatic negotiation rather than militant confrontation.

In the 1980s, when the unions led the resistance to the dictatorship, these union leaders had become radical political leaders, as their every action, however wage oriented or locally focused, encountered repression. But with the unions, particularly in the auto industry, now facing rising unemployment and declining influence, their leaders urged restraint. Some other key PT activists—for example, former guerrilla José Genoino, president of the party until the corruption revelations—reacted to the fall of the Berlin wall by dropping belief in radical change and adopting a variant of Tony Blair's "third way," i.e., weak social democracy. But the differences between the leadership and the majority of *petistas* who campaigned on the principle of mobilizing and educating the people were submerged by the desire for a PT victory. Those who tried to warn of corruption, like César Benjamin, a leading party official until 1994, were rebuffed as disloyal. "We believed too much in Lula," confesses Orlando Fantasini, a deputy for São Paulo. A radical Catholic, Fantasini is part of a "Left Bloc" of around twenty deputies and a few senators that was quick to demand an investigation into the corruption revelations.

Throughout the 1990s Lula personified *petista* hopes for social justice and popular democracy. If Dirceu and the *cúpula* demanded greater autonomy, or argued for centralization of the party at the expense of the local nuclei in the name of a Lula victory, their demands were granted. In elections, campaigning in the streets gave way to marketing in the media; activist volunteers were replaced by paid leafleteers. Meanwhile, Lula drank bottles of whiskey with the bosses of Globo, thinking he could get them on his side. His wishful thinking was understandable: Globo has immense power in a country where the vast majority of people receive all their news and political commentary through TV. PT's opponents had deployed this power to great effect in 1998. But Lula's obsession with wooing Globo betrayed a fatal lack of faith in the capacity—including the electoral capacity—of his own party members.

The PT's reputation for democracy was based partly on the rights of different political tendencies to representation at all levels of the party. But from the mid-1990s, according to César Benjamin and others, Dirceu started to use a slush fund to strengthen the position of the Campo Majoritário, or Majority Camp, building a network of local leaders who depended on him. Along with the autonomy demanded for Lula's group, this made the PT's internal democracy irrelevant and ineffectual.

As I listened to party activists and former activists at every level, from organizers in the northern city of Fortaleza to one of Lula's veteran advisers in the Palàcio do Planalto, it became clear that the neoliberalism of Lula's government and the systematic corruption of the party organization went hand in hand. The steady strangling of democracy—which is, after all, what corruption is about—meant that the party lost all autonomy from the government. It also shut down all the mechanisms linking the social movements to the party—which therefore ceased to act as a channel for their expectations, their pressure and their anger. Even Marco Aurélio Garcia, co-founder of the PT and Lula's chief adviser on foreign affairs, told me that he had no way of calling the economics minister to account.

The coming months are likely to see a struggle to reclaim the party—and the left more generally—from the government. Many former *petistas* are now associated with the PSOL, a new party to the left of the PT formed in 2003. Meanwhile, Lula is trying to distance himself from the party without losing its support. (He denies personal involvement in the corruption, but few are convinced.) The president's popularity has been steadily

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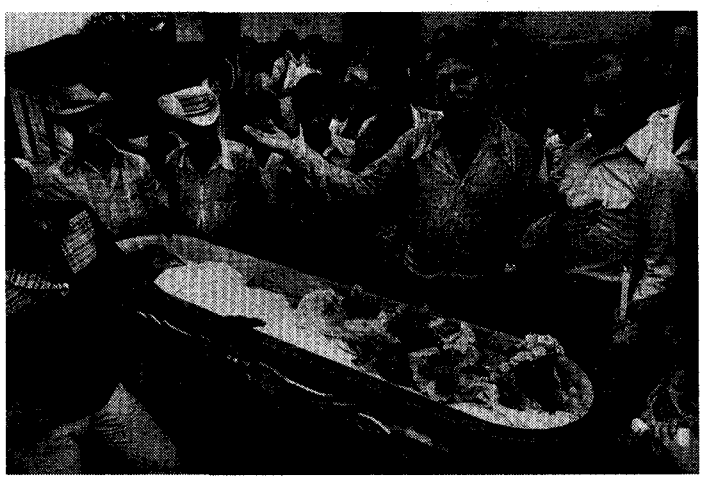
waning since the corruption scandal broke—but not as rapidly as his party's. And Lula's support has held up in the rural areas, where even the government's meager Family Grant program of direct financial assistance has lifted millions out of extreme poverty. He seems to be betting on winning a second term by building up a "Lulismo" distinct from "*petismo*." This might involve building an electoral coalition involving other parties in addition to the PT.

"Lulismo," says Francisco de Oliveira, "is a kind of populism, but it is different from the populism created by Vargas [Colombia], Perón [Argentina] and Cárdenas [Mexico]. In authoritarian fashion they included poor people in politics. Lulismo takes poor people out of politics into clientelism. It is the worst outcome imaginable for the PT."

Also bad news for the PT is the election of Ricardo Berzoini as party president. Berzoini, a trade union leader, won a very narrow victory. He'll be forced to rely on Dirceu, who remains the power behind the throne, even after reigning as Lula's chief of staff. Berzoini's victory is a sign of the *cúpula*'s continuing influence. But the strong showing by the left's candidate, former Porto Alegre mayor Raúl Pont, suggests that the PT's radical spirit is not entirely crushed, though its expression varies significantly from region to region. In Rio Grande do Sul, where Pont's support approached over 70 percent, the focus is on retaking power in the state government and in Porto Alegre. In São Paulo, where the *cúpula* is strong, many on the left are likely to leave the PT, with most joining the PSOL—not as a permanent home but as a base for wider dialogue across the left. Many of those leaving the PT do not see electoral activity as their priority, but rather will return to working with social movements.

"The situation is open—very open," said Feliz Sanchez, who coordinated the participatory budget when the PT was in government in São Paulo. Around the world there is an experimental left refusing to accept a forced choice between some variant of Blairism and the abandonment of electoral politics. The disaster facing the PT should prompt us not to turn away from Brazil and search elsewhere for a new political holy grail but rather to learn with our *petista* or ex-*petista* friends from their defeat and try to deepen their innovative but necessarily incomplete answers to questions that face us all. ■



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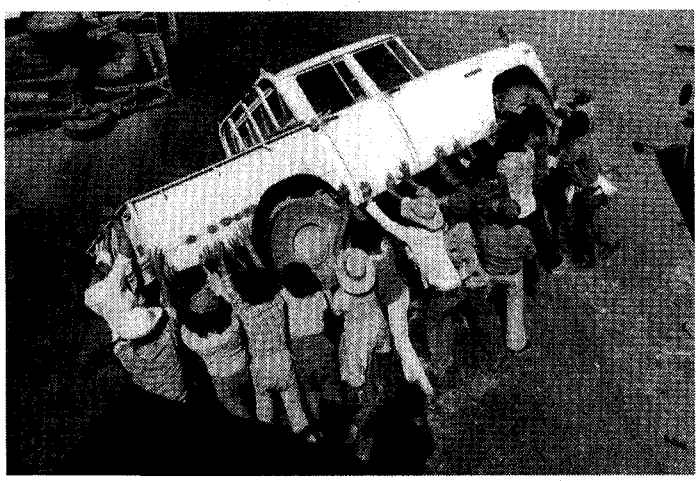
Mother and daughter killed by government bombing, San Francisco Javier, 1983



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Building barricades on the coastal highway to prevent army access, Usulután, March 1981

Salvador Memories

SCOTT SHERMAN

A photograph by Eugene Richards, currently on display at the International Center of Photography (ICP) in Manhattan, captures a subdued moment in the life of a US military "adviser" stationed abroad. The man—white, in his 30s, with an elongated mustache—is sprawled out in bed reading a book. A pistol lies on the mattress. Pinups from *Playboy* and *Hustler* cover the walls. A rifle rests upright. It could be a scene from present-day Iraq or Afghanistan, except for one detail: A hefty dictionary perched on his shelf is not in Arabic or Pashto but in Spanish. The year is 1983, and the country is El Salvador.

Scott Sherman is a Nation *contributing writer.*

Richards's work is a centerpiece of "El Salvador: Work of Thirty Photographers," a show that brings together five dozen images produced by international correspondents stationed there between 1979 and 1983. The photographs first appeared in a book that Susan Meiselas, Harry Mattison, Fae Rubenstein and Carolyn Forché assembled in 1983, in an effort to raise public consciousness about the Salvadoran conflict, then in its bloodiest phase; an exhibition of the pictures subsequently toured the country for two years, stopping at museums, churches, libraries and universities. The collection was recently donated in its entirety to the ICP and will be on display there until November 27.

The Salvadoran civil war, which raged for a dozen years

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before a negotiated settlement was reached in 1992, now seems to belong to a distant past, but it was a conflict that claimed 75,000 lives in El Salvador and cost the US taxpayer more than $4 billion. The show works powerfully on the mind and the heart because it brings back a flood of memories from those years.

Before us are stark black-and-white images of the martyrs and victims whose deaths did so much to launch a grassroots movement against US intervention in El Salvador, and to expose the savagery of the Salvadoran military: the three American nuns and a lay worker—Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan—whose bodies were tossed into a shallow grave; Archbishop Oscar Romero, gunned down by a sharpshooter while saying mass in San Salvador; and the hundreds of civilians killed at El Mozote in 1981 by the American-trained Atlacatl Battalion, one of the most infamous massacres in Latin American history.

Many of these photographs received considerable attention when they were originally published in journals ranging from *The New York Times Magazine* to *Paris Match*, and down through the years they have lost none of their ability to shock and incite. There is Alain Keler's image of a teenager killed in the capital by the National Guard after a street theater performance critical of the government: The young man lies in his coffin, on top of which someone has scrawled: "I love you, I will not forget you, I will tell my daughter about you when she grows up and can understand"; there is Susan Meiselas's picture of three white handprints emblazoned on the red wooden door of a slain peasant organizer in Chalatenango province: The *mano blanco* was the macabre signature of the death squads. And there is Michel Philippot's depiction of left-wing activists being tossed face-down into the back of a military pickup truck, stacked like wood, guarded by grim-faced soldiers with machine guns.

Some of the lesser-known photographs are equally stirring. In one remarkable shot by Mattison, taken in Usulután in 1981, we see fifteen campesinos, men and women alike, building a barricade across the Pan American Highway. We see only their backs and their hands outstretched in furious labor as they overturn a massive white pickup truck—an image that somehow seems to encapsulate the entire history of campesino rebellion in Latin America. The show isn't all darkness, mayhem and agitation, however: In Christian Poveda's "Portraits of Guerrillas," taken in Chalatenango in 1981, we glimpse six young male fighters posing with their weapons, in various states of pride and unease, looking like soldiers from the Mexican Revolution. And Keler's, Meiselas's and Mattison's shots of weddings, fiestas and *chupaderos* are a reminder that life in El Salvador proceeded apace despite the disruptions and violence of civil war.

"There was a sense of urgency," Meiselas said a few weeks ago, reflecting on the circumstances that prompted her group to assemble the book and the traveling exhibition in 1983. "One felt at that time that documenting it, being a witness, was the only justified act one could do. There was a belief that you could sort of 'call out' from Central America and it would give presence to something that was so distant for the public here."

"El Salvador: Work of Thirty Photographers" takes on new meaning in the shadow of the US war in Iraq. *Newsweek* reported in January that the Pentagon was considering a "Salvador option" in Iraq, in which Special Forces teams "would advise, support and possibly train Iraqi squads...to target Sunni insurgents and their sympathizers." The US public has largely forgotten the Salvador conflict, but it appears that the Pentagon has not. In this context the show at the ICP is many things: a powerful testimonial to the stoicism and resilience of Salvadorans, whose postwar tribulations are still poorly understood by Americans; a homage to a group of politically conscious photographers who risked their safety to bring us these images (three of the photographers in the show died while reporting from Central America); and a haunting, incontrovertible reminder that the "Salvador option" leads directly to the charnel house. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
and someone else has to deal with the aftermath. It happens all over the place."

JEREMY SCAHILL

BLACK & WHITE & TIRED ALL OVER

Arabi, La.

■ I am so sick and tired of this racial game everyone is playing. Katrina didn't care whether you were black, white, yellow or green. She tore through my hometown, where I planned on raising my children in good schools and with nice neighbors. My town is predominantly white, just the average working class trying to live where there isn't much crime and our children do not have to walk through a metal detector to get to class. Black people lived in St. Bernard, and these people are just like us, working-class folks who want to live in peace with good schools and good neighbors.

I'm tired of hearing about New Orleans. Don't get me wrong—my hometown is only ten minutes away, and I loved the feel of the French Quarter. We were in New Orleans almost every weekend, and I worked in that city that I truly loved. I loved living in St. Bernard Parish. Katrina stormed through my town, and it is now 100 percent unrecoverable! New Orleans, on the other hand, will recover.

As for me and my children, we are left to figure it out for ourselves. Not one National Guard helicopter came into my parish after Katrina. In fact, there was a no-fly order in place because there were so many dead bodies that the governor did not want the media to air the footage. So, not the President, not a Congressman helped to rescue the people in my parish left on rooftops. The people rescuing our citizens were the St. Bernard Parish police officers, who had to stay, and average citizens rescuing one another with their own boats. No one other than ourselves were there for our people. It isn't only the poor black people who were left behind. My heart feels pain for anyone left on a rooftop no matter what color they are! The old, sick, disabled and children were left to die in my parish. I know this is true because some of my family members are on the St. Bernard Parish police force, and I cannot tell you how many horrific text messages were received and sent throughout this terrible event. My children and I have never been so scared before in our lives. We are displaced, having to flee to Texas.

JULIE GUNTHER

THEY ALL DON'T *REALLY* LOOK ALIKE!

In Eric Alterman's last column, he inadvertently referred to Lesley Stahl as Judy Woodruff.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The War of the Liberals

STEPHEN HOLMES

POWER AND THE IDEALISTS: Or, The Passion of Joschka Fischer and Its Aftermath.
By Paul Berman.
Soft Skull. 311 pp. $23.95.

AT THE POINT OF A GUN: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention.
By David Rieff.
Simon & Schuster. 270 pp. $24.

More instructive than the speechlessness of the Democratic Party, unable to react coherently to the bloody impasse in Iraq, is the debate among progressive writers about the justice of the invasion. To penetrate the thinking of the prowar liberals, whose zeal for toppling a malignant dictatorship split the left and therefore eased the slog to disaster, we need to cast our eyes back to the 1990s. Written by thoughtful observers of the current crisis, two new highly personal books help us understand the gestation of liberal hawks in the dozen years between the fall of the wall and the fall of the towers. Images of Rwanda and Kosovo were not especially poignant for the principal Bush Administration insiders who made the decision to invade Iraq. At the outset, for them, humanitarianism was not even a pretext for war. But the appalling failures and modest successes of humanitarian intervention during the 1990s did shape the thinking of certain sparkling liberal intellects. Their heady support for war played little or no role in the decision to invade Iraq. But it did diminish and isolate voices of dissent, helping insure that Bush's ill-fated war was set afoot with little national debate, even in the high-circulation liberal press.

The tenor of Paul Berman's new book, *Power and the Idealists*, is suggested by the word "tragedy" in the title to his concluding chapter, "The '68ers and the Tragedy of Iraq." He freely acknowledges "the scale and gravity of America's blunders in Iraq." But he can find nothing especially critical to say about the handful of former '68ers who, invoking humanitarian commitments, clambered aboard the wagons of war. They should be judged for their good intentions alone, he implies.

The seeds of this forgiving and self-forgiving attitude are sown in chapter one. The book opens with a lengthy essay on the tribulations of Joschka Fischer, the popular Green politician and German foreign minister from 1998 to 2005, who had been embarrassed by the publication of some old photos that showed him as a young man beating a policeman. Originally published in the September 3, 2001, edition of *The New Republic*, Berman's reflections on Fischer open a window onto his own pre-9/11 mindset. His preoccupation, at that time, was to show "the evolution of the leading '68ers from revolutionary leftism to liberal internationalism." He traced the path by which Fischer, the young anti-bourgeois street fighter in bluejeans who flirted discreetly with lethal vandalism, came to endorse German participation in the Kosovo war. Berman's theme was "how someone with an extremely radical New Left orientation could have ended up, in the fullness of time, a friend of NATO."

Neoconservative supporters of the Iraq War are not the only ones whose convictions were tested by the Mesopotamian quagmire.

Foreign-policy realists would never have backed the Kosovo intervention, Berman contends, because "realism is never genocide's enemy." The lofty principles that inspired the Kosovo action were kept alive, he speculates, by "the veterans of the student uprisings circa 1968." These idealists hated genocide and "put matters of conscience at the heart of their thinking." Thus, Berman concludes, "NATO's intervention could just as easily be described as the '68ers' War."

The shift from skirmishing with the police to bombing the *génocidaires* was "a generational trajectory," not limited

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to Fischer's swapping of bluejeans for a three-piece suit. It was the story, according to Berman, of how the New Left, beginning in France in the 1970s, shed its antimilitarist, anticapitalist, antibourgeois and anticolonialist stances and became, instead, fiercely antitotalitarian. The Cambodian genocide had been an earsplitting wake-up call, forcing open-minded leftists to admit that cruelty and oppression do not stem exclusively from Western imperialism. By the mid-1990s some had come to believe that American power could be a, even *the*, force for good in the world.

Under the impact of the terrorist attack on New York City, Berman put aside his chronicle of the New Left's coming of age and produced, in short order, *Terror and Liberalism*, a passionately written and widely heralded interpretation of the meaning of 9/11. The book's thesis was intentionally provocative. The consensus at the time was that a diffuse and mobile enemy such as Al Qaeda presented a radically new threat, impossible to compare with Nazi Germany or Communist Russia. Berman belittled such differences, declaring that the "war on terror" was really nothing new. It was certainly not part of an unprecedented clash of civilizations. It was, instead, just one more battle in the ongoing twentieth-century confrontation between liberalism and totalitarianism.

Modeling himself roughly on Hannah Arendt, who exposed the deep but underappreciated similarity between German Nazism and Soviet Communism, Berman drew attention to what he considered the underlying identity of state tyranny and nonstate terrorism. Or, rather, he set out to justify two farfetched analogies, both essential to defending the Bush Administration's response to 9/11. He first tried to convince us that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, far from being a tribal war over scarce land and water, is part of the wider spiritual war between liberalism and apocalyptic irrationalism, not worth distinguishing too sharply from the conflict between America and Al Qaeda. And then he attempted to show that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden represented two "branches" of an essentially homogeneous Muslim extremism. By hammering away at this second parallel, he echoed Bush's contention that the invasion of Iraq was both a fitting reply to 9/11 and a shrewd way to protect America from 9/11-style attacks.

True enough, Berman hurled an occasional jeer Bush's way. After all, the President's entourage did not disguise its contempt for "the Vietnam generation." Nevertheless, by enlisting antifascism to support the Administration's "war on terror," Berman made Bush into a steely *résistant* fighting the new totalitarian evil. Less explicitly but more worryingly, he implied that Bush's antiwar critics were, in some unwitting fashion, collaborators with violent extremism. They were playing into Saddam's hands, abandoning Saddam's victims and of course flirting with anti-Semitism.

For Paul Berman, the 'war on terror' was simply one more battle in the confrontation between liberalism and totalitarianism.

Having secured his reputation as a liberal hawk and withering critic of Bush's critics, Berman has returned to his earlier project, adding to his original essay on Fischer four lively chapters that trace the way certain former New Leftists (though not Fischer) went beyond their support for the Kosovo war and endorsed Bush's invasion of Iraq. His heroes are all highly cultured Europeans. They intuitively grasp, the way Bush's antiwar critics supposedly do not, "the dangers posed by the extremist currents in the Arab world." In their youth, curiously enough, some of them had thought the spirit of "absolute evil" (namely, Nazism) had survived World War II and mysteriously migrated to postwar bourgeois society and to Israel. Berman resurrects this idea, breathing new life into the metaphor of itinerant malevolence by varying the destination. The spirit of absolute evil (apocalyptic totalitarianism) has survived the cold war, he writes, and has now migrated to the Middle East, transmogrified into Arab and Muslim extremism.

Although he sneers at Richard Perle ("Pangloss on the Potomac"), Berman ultimately allows little daylight between himself and the neoconservatives. He accepts their interpretation of antiwar liberals as quaking pacifists who live in denial, inventing a picture of the world that requires no military action, presumably because they are afraid to stand up and fight. It comes as no surprise, therefore, when he writes deferentially of "some people" around Bush who had a "strategic overview" and "entertained large geopolitical ambitions." And he basically agrees with them that "something ambitious had to be done, not just in Iraq but with an eye to transforming the entire region" and setting off "a broader revolution for liberal values in the Arab world." Military defeat had forced German extremists to abandon their apocalyptic anti-Semitism. So why couldn't military defeat force Muslim extremists to abandon *their* apocalyptic anti-Semitism?

This is how Berman formulates the neoconservative case for war, to which he subscribes: "The American strategists noticed that terrorism had begun to flourish across a wide swath of the Arab and Muslim world. And they argued that something had to be done about the political culture across the whole of that wide swath. The American strategists saw in Saddam's Iraq a main center of that political culture, yet also a place where the political culture could be redressed and transformed." Something had to be done "to bring about the downfall of extremist currents throughout the region," and that something would be war, "a human-rights intervention that was also going to be a national-security intervention." A side benefit would be the destruction of the one army in the region "large enough to worry the Israelis."

While making common cause with right-wing supporters of Bush's militarized response to 9/11, Berman apparently feels little cultural affinity for such pro-war conservatives as Charles Krauthammer and William Kristol. For more agreeable companionship, he seeks out European writers like the ex-Maoist French philosopher André Glucksmann and Polish dissident Adam Michnik. He honors them for their belief that American tenacity alone can dislodge brutal tyrants from power. He admires Glucksmann as "an enemy of extreme suffering" who early abandoned anticapitalism and embraced hostility to tyranny in every form and who, in blessing Bush's war, memorably remarked that Iraqis, too, deserve their D-Day. And he is pleased to inform us that prominent Eastern European dissidents, among them Václav Havel and Michnik, claim that "people all over the world needed America to lead a resistance against the new totalitarianism of the Muslim world."

But the principal hero of Berman's story is Bernard Kouchner, a founder of Doctors Without Borders and head of the United Nations administration in Kosovo from July 1999 to January 2001. For Berman "nobody in Europe was more heroic"

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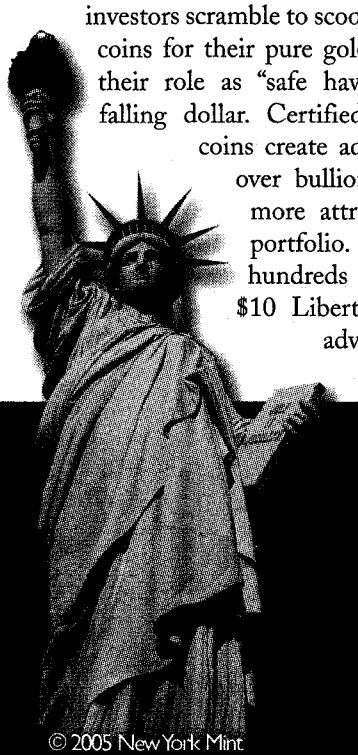

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than this "fearless humanitarian doctor" who always seemed to be "on a mission against injustice." The basic principle underlying Kouchner's political activism was that "the supremely oppressed had a right to be rescued, no matter what the theorists of anti-imperialism or the defenders of the inviolability of borders might say." Kouchner supported the war because he knew that Iraq was studded with Srebrenicas. If you hate genocide, place matters of conscience at the heart of your thinking and appreciate the larger grandeur of the interventionist idea (in Kouchner's terms, the *droit d'ingérence*, or right of interference), then you can only applaud the American invasion of Iraq. Never mind that most ex-'68ers, including Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Joschka Fischer, opposed the war as an expression of the Bush Administration's revolutionary hubris. Kouchner's example reassures Berman that an ex-'68er could join the war party and preserve his "left-wing soul."

Like Kouchner, Berman was "furious that Bush didn't make the pure humanitarian case" for war. Instead of stressing the morally lofty *casus belli* advanced by Kouchner and other prowar European liberals, Administration spokesmen implied that the war in Iraq had purposes other than rescuing the oppressed and rolling back Islamic extremism. They emphasized the same short-run objectives that had rallied public support behind the brief Afghan campaign, namely revenge for 9/11 and self-defense against WMDs. That these were the "most widely publicized presentations to the general public," Berman remarks, indicated the Administration's deplorable lack of strategic vision.

"Why didn't the Bush administration, in trying to drum up a few European allies, look to these people and their arguments—to the dissident heroes and the admired humanitarians?" he asks. This question is presumably rhetorical. That Bush could have mobilized significant support from Europe by drawing on Kouchner's "moral prestige" defies belief. Berman knows that Bush had little to gain by embracing Europe's chastened '68ers, who favored giving war a chance on purely moral grounds. As Berman says, most Republicans had "sunk into nationalist isolation" and were "contemptuous of the Western Europeans." To rally his base, moreover, Bush regularly flaunts his indifference to the patronizing morality of lesser and weaker nations. For that reason alone, Kouchner's high-minded endorsement of Bush's war was destined to be just as inconsequential as Berman's.

Snubbed by the war party in Washington, Kouchner was forced to observe the invasion's disastrous aftermath from the sidelines. But the catastrophic bungling of the American occupation proved almost too painful to watch. According to Berman, at least, "Kouchner was beside himself," especially when Paul Bremer disbanded the Iraqi army. When he was faced with such delirious incompetence, his "Gallic nostrils flared." As things went *de mal en pis*, "Kouchner fumed," "Kouchner was dumbfounded," "Kouchner was amazed," "Kouchner was apoplectic," "Kouchner was astonished" and "Kouchner was dumbfounded yet again." But these droll reminders of how prowar idealists became disillusioned when tyranny was replaced by anarchy seem oddly flippant. True, today's Iraq can be labeled "a tragedy." But this does not exculpate those who worked tirelessly to beautify the garbled motives behind Bush's war. Their surprise does not lift responsibility from their shoulders, for they could easily have taken more seriously the widely predicted possibility of a tragic outcome. Fischer did, and if he was sickened when things went badly, he was not "dumbfounded." For he understood, even before the inva-

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sion was launched, that the Bush Administration was probably incapable, in such a dauntingly complex environment, of accomplishing the lofty goals it had publicly proclaimed.

But where exactly does Berman's theoretical analysis go wrong? Five deficiencies in his argument stand out.

His analogies, first of all, are tendentious to an extreme. Islamist murderousness resembles Bolshevik and Nazi murderousness. The planetary battle against terrorism (World War IV) resembles the planetary battle against communism. Baath dictatorship resembles Islamic militancy. The problem with such comparisons is not only that they are strained. They are also transparently calculated to serve a partisan political program. Analogies that challenge the Bush Administration (such as Palestinian violence and anticolonial violence) are filtered out, not because they are unrevealing but because they introduce a dissonant note.

Take, for instance, Berman's peculiar claim that "on the plane of anti-American propaganda, the Iraqi Baath and Al Qaeda were already allied" because Saddam's press had celebrated the September 11 attacks. The nature of this purported alliance between religious insurgents and a secular oppressor is never explained. In other passages, moreover, Berman concedes that Islamic radicalism has arisen in opposition to authoritarian secular regimes. But he is much less interested in possible causal connections between the two than in their metaphysical identity. His false moral clarity rests entirely on his assertion that spiritually they are one and the same. The Administration's attempts to associate Iraq and Al Qaeda logistically came to naught. Berman's cultural and philosophical approach, by contrast, raises the identification of Saddam and Osama, the tyrant and the terrorist, to a level of blurry abstraction that no facts can possibly refute.

A second weakness appears in Berman's repeated assertion that antiwar liberals are naïve optimists, oblivious to the deep roots of irrational violence in human nature and therefore unable to take the true measure of our fanatical enemies. But should someone who speculated that an American invasion of Iraq would force Islamic extremists to give up their paranoid conspiracy theories about the Jews accuse others of facile optimism? He classifies Saddam's Iraq as "totalitarian" because "there was no sign of democratic opposition at all." But did this absence not suggest that an occupying army would find no well-organized constituencies for a reconstruction of Iraqi politics along liberal lines? What kind of political system did Berman imagine would emerge in Iraq after the toppling of Saddam? Was it going to be a democracy, namely a system in which a well-organized incumbent party loses elections to a well-organized opposition party and voluntarily leaves office knowing that it will not be harmed once out of power? Is that what he, with his understanding of human irrationality, expected for Iraq?

Berman scolded antiwar liberals for their naïveté about power, even as he dreamed that the US military could foster Iraqi democracy.

And how good a job does Berman himself do at identifying and understanding the gravest threats to American national security? Here lies the third flaw in Berman's framework. He uncritically endorses Bush's repeated claim that 9/11 was not a crime of mass murder but rather an act of war against America. Putting his own thoughts, as he often does, in the mouth of his subject, he writes: "Fischer rejected the policeman's view of Islamist terror—the idea that, with a handful of well-chosen arrests or the dismantling of a small number of underground cells, the problem could be solved." Terrorism is not a police problem, because policemen cannot redraw the political map of the Middle East, spread freedom or compel extremists to abandon their extremism. Only soldiers, apparently, can do these things.

We are dealing, admittedly, with off-the-shelf categories, since neither the war paradigm nor the crime paradigm fits perfectly the battle against transnational Islamic terrorism, which involves political violence by nonstate actors. But Berman, like Bush, prefers the war model to the crime model, because the former seems to signal a more serious approach, a willingness to send young men to die in large numbers, for example.

But this suggestion of greater realism and seriousness is deceptive. The war paradigm, besides inflating all too conveniently the unsupervised powers of the executive branch, assumes that America's unrivaled military superiority guarantees its success in the current struggle. It suggests that our enemy will eventually surrender and that we will be able to put the nightmare behind us. The crime paradigm has less rosy implications. It assumes that our government can no more stop the importing of a nuclear weapon into a major urban center than it can stop the clandestine flow of contraband drugs. That is to say, the crime paradigm, when applied to terrorism, has chilling implications precisely because it denies that "the problem could be solved." To turn from the crime paradigm to the war paradigm, therefore, does not bespeak a greater willingness to face the enemy. On the contrary, it is a classic case of sticking one's head in the sand (of Iraq).

A fourth and closely related objection concerns Berman's insistence that our real enemy is Muslim extremism. This idea, too, appears confrontational but is actually escapist. The gravest threat to American national security today is no longer the Soviet nuclear arsenal, obviously, but neither can it be identified exclusively with Muslim extremism. American national security is threatened most seriously by those laxly regulated markets in lethal matériel and know-how that, in the aftermath of the cold war, have emerged alongside the global communication, transportation and banking systems created largely by the West. Terrorist groups have a global reach only because we have supplied it to them on computer discs, via the Internet and ATMs and so forth. And these are not the West's only contributions. The petrodollars that we are now pumping at an unprecedented rate into politically unstable parts of the world may make it easier for a private group to acquire, without detection, a compact weapon of unspeakable destructiveness—a weapon, of course, originally created by Western science.

It may be disheartening to realize that the dangers we face, because deeply intertwined with American power and prosperity, cannot be eliminated. But candor in this respect can at least help us avoid the temptation to tie down a vast proportion of our scarce national-security assets in distant and territorially localized conflicts. Heightened self-awareness can also help us avoid identifying the ultimate source of danger, erroneously, with an odious enemy whom we can definitively defeat in war. Berman's construct has the opposite effect. By encouraging us to focus obsessively on Islamic extremism, it fosters a cavalier attitude toward other threats, such as nuclear proliferation in Russia, Pakistan and North Korea. It also leads us to ignore the extent to which our eco-

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nomically open and technically advanced way of life, and not a replaceable network of zealots intoxicated by an amalgam of religious and revolutionary slogans, is the frighteningly enduring problem with which we have to cope.

A fifth obscurity in Berman's thinking concerns the way faith has influenced both sides in the war on terror. He wants us to believe that we are witnessing a confrontation of freedom versus tyranny. The Europeans, by contrast, are much more likely to code the conflict as a struggle of secularism versus religion. The second polarity, needless to say, is embarrassing to an Administration that is no more eager to blame proselytizing religion and rogue religious charities for revolutionary violence aimed at the United States than it is to lay any responsibility on unregulated markets and geysers of petrodollars. A rogue state is a much more convenient scapegoat, distracting public attention from nonstate sponsors of terrorism (including rogue religious charities) that hit too close to home. The reader will not be surprised, therefore, when Berman labors to muffle the role of religion in 9/11, claiming that Islamic fundamentalism is really "a modern ideological temptation, familiar to Europeans." He is particularly certain that "jihadi suicide" is "the height of modernity."

A decade ago, Rieff promoted a 'recolonization of part of the world.' Post-recolonization, he has been having second thoughts.

In the Muslim world, over the past few decades, an obvious alternative to the God That Failed has been, well, God. Totalitarian ideologies—as Berman, too, learned in college—contained secularized eschatologies. Totalitarianism rejected the religious answers but retained the religious questions, re-creating a worldview that contained heretics and orthodoxy, sacred texts and martyrs, banishment and anathema, contamination and purity. So why is Berman so sure, when he sees these ideas resurface among Islamists, that they derive from the secularized religion of totalitarianism rather than from religion itself, which lent them to totalitarianism in the first place? After all, antiliberalism did not begin with twentieth-century totalitarianism. Nor is apocalypse a twentieth-century idea. Revealed religion is itself deeply antiliberal, to the extent that it makes a self-appointed vanguard of the faithful so certain of what God wants that it feels free to use coercion to force the rest of society to submit to God's ostensible will. There is nothing "entirely modern" about such an outlook, nor about a "system of oppression that reaches into the coziest and most private corners of life."

Berman's decision to turn "totalitarian" into a catchall term, covering Osama bin Laden as well as Hitler and Stalin, also encourages Americans to cling unthinkingly to their cold war habits of mind. Why make any profound readjustments if we are still fighting totalitarianism? One stimulus to radically refashioning the country's approach to national security is the striking fact that an antireligious enemy has been displaced by a religious enemy. Berman's conceptual scheme blunts the impact of this obvious truth. It also helps conceal a deep perversity of the current war of good versus evil. The US President apparently believes that he has been personally assigned to punish the enemies of God. This fantasy is disquieting because we are now facing enemies who believe that *they* have been personally assigned to punish the enemies of God. By drawing such a clear-cut contrast between liberals and totalitarians, Berman throws a veil over this unsettling coincidence of self-images.

Interestingly enough, Berman admits that "fantasy role-playing"—the Bush Administration comes to mind—"lies at the heart of a good deal of modern history." It is so pervasive, it turns out, that Berman indulges in it too. He poses as a modern-day Orwell, standing up to tyranny, however insufferable to the literati such a daring posture may prove to be. This is not the book's most pernicious analogy, to be sure. It may be the most revealing, however, designed as it is to swat away pre-emptively Berman's future critics by associating them with weakly conventional minds unable to recognize authentic moral courage when they see it. But readers should not be put off by this modest conceit. They should instead savor this colorful book for what it is: the last testament of an exotic species, the 1990s liberal hawk, by no means destined to survive the blast furnace of Iraq.

That David Rieff, too, aims to explore the relation between idealism and power is evident from his very title. But he is a more widely traveled observer of reality than Berman. Having spent years studying what he once called "the political instrumentalization of humanitarianism," Rieff is well poised to help us understand how, in the Iraq War, human rights talk lent an illusory aura of legitimacy to an initially dubious and ultimately ruinous military adventure.

The first half of *At the Point of a Gun* consists of articles written over the past dozen years about genocide, sundry failings of the UN, Rwanda, Kosovo and liberal imperialism. The second half, to which the first is merely a prelude, is devoted to Iraq. Rieff appends a brief comment to each essay, informing us how his views have or have not evolved in the interim. Although Rieff "began the decade in Sarajevo a convinced interventionist," today he is "no longer an interventionist," having returned from Iraq with grave "doubts about the entire project of humanitarian intervention."

Back in the 1990s Rieff denounced in scorching language "a left that would prefer to see genocide in Bosnia and the mass deportation of the Kosovars rather than strengthen, however marginally, the hegemony of the United States." This accusation was meant to shame liberals into shedding their Vietnam-era distrust of US military actions abroad. At this period, then, Rieff was "at least partly of Wolfowitz's party," favoring "a recolonization of part of the world." He wrote that "liberal imperialism may be the best we are going to do in these callous and sentimental times," adding that "the real task" was not to destroy but rather to "humanize this new imperial order" and to correct its excesses where possible.

Rieff's tenderness, a decade back, for American hegemony arose from the perceived absence of feasible alternatives. Who, if not the United States, could take effective action during humanitarian crises? Certainly not the pitiful UN—a "broken instrument" and "little more than a waste of hope," as he put it. Passivity, servility, conformism, complacency, cowardice and indolence made a mockery of the UN's implicit claim to be "the bureaucratic arm of the world's transcendental values." The Secretariat, because of "its wish not to raise problems, which the Permanent Five prefer to ignore," stood by and watched massacres unfold without even making an effort to publicize or mobilize a response to the horror.

Contributing little to world peace and security, the UN has failed to live up to the hopes of its founders. The best that can be said for it is that it remains "the world's leading humanitarian relief organization," a kind of giant Red Cross. Absent US backing, the UN is unable to enforce the most basic human rights norms. It was

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almost inevitable, therefore, that the UN would become "a de facto colonial office to US power." As a result, Rieff "could see no other alternative to western military power." He therefore argued, quite forcefully, that "the deployment of US power is to be preferred to the alternatives on offer."

And today? Faced with the "appalling and degrading" conditions in postwar Iraq, where things were "worse than anything I was able to write about it," Rieff has felt compelled to reconsider his advocacy of US-led humanitarian intervention. What he discovered on his visits to Iraq was a collapsed state, not a liberated country. Those who fervently embrace American power, it turns out, are also condemning people to death. Rieff shifts his emphasis, therefore, from the complicity of noninterventionists to the complicity of interventionists. He begins to write persuasively about "the responsibility one has in advocating war when one will have little or no responsibility or say in how it is waged." Idealists who trumpeted a purely humanitarian case for invading Iraq should have known that their benevolent motives were not sufficient to trigger the war and were not going to govern the way the war and the occupation unfolded.

Rieff criticizes action and nonaction, imperialism and anti-imperialism, hope and hopelessness, too much caution and too little.

Rieff's analysis is appealing in many ways. But it, too, has a few critical shortcomings. Some of his most debatable claims appear in a chapter titled "The Specter of Imperialism: The Marriage of the Human Rights Left and the New Imperialist Right." Here he argues that "human rights has become, however inconsistently applied, the official ideology of the American empire—something conservatives have understood, even if most activists themselves have not." In the cold war, admittedly, "the American human rights movement collaborated intimately with Washington in its activism within the Soviet empire." But is human rights now, or has it ever been, the ideology of American empire?

Rieff's chief exemplar of the humanitarian left is Samantha Power, whom he takes to be "emblematic of the historic compromise between the human rights movement and the American empire." Her book *"A Problem From Hell"* is "a breviary for this new military humanism." In it she "has made the case for legal imperialism more elegantly and fastidiously than any other advocate on the American scene today."

According to Rieff, Power wraps herself in the "antiseptic sheets" of international law, not admitting that her ideals can be defended only if the American empire expands unilaterally, without excessive regard for international law. In his own words: "For activists to now, after a decade of calling for the US to unleash its power, lament the demise of multilateralism and regimes of international law is grotesque and unseemly." Here Rieff makes an interesting point: If you call for a war crimes tribunal you are implicitly calling for invasion and conquest, for there is no "Nuremberg-style justice without a Nuremberg-style military occupation." From this reasonable premise he concludes, more contentiously, that liberals who both advocate human rights and distrust the military imperialism of a conservative, arrogant and secretive Administration are morally incoherent. After all: "These human rights regimes will be imposed by force of arms or they will not be imposed at all, and it is disingenuous of a human rights movement that, wittingly or unwittingly over the course of the 1990s, set the moral table for the new imperial mood in America, to suddenly recoil from the Bush administration Captain Reynault-style because, shock, horror, they're unilateralist, Bible-thumping, gun-loving, anti-civil liberties reactionaries." Neoconservatives like Robert Kagan and Max Boot are much more clearheaded than Power, Rieff concludes. They sleep perfectly soundly after running with the hounds.

One might have thought that Rieff's attitude toward the humanitarian left would mellow as he became disenchanted with America's imperialist project. But that is not what we find here. He dissociates himself further from Kagan and Boot, of course. But in this collection, at least, he reserves his most biting criticisms, again, for Samantha Power, this time for her "hubristic altruism," which he interprets as an invitation to endless do-gooder wars. She wants to pledge America to righting the world's wrongs, he claims, but she does not realize that this unleashing of self-righteous violence will end up corrupting the would-be saviors of mankind. An uncompromising absolutist, she is "on the *same* millenarian kick as the administration," inadvertently corroborating the good-versus-evil simplicities that excited and misled Bush in his bungled response to 9/11. And arguments like hers, he suggests, have provided "a recipe for a recapitulation in the twenty-first century of the horrors of nineteen-century colonialism."

After lambasting the humanitarian left first for its legalism and then for its millenarianism, Rieff launches a third line of attack. He explains that Power, Michael Ignatieff, Aryeh Neier, Kenneth Roth and other human rights activists ended up objecting to the Iraq War only because of their East Coast snobbery. They would have favored the war, or supported it much longer, if Clinton had launched it, because their "real objections" to the invasion were "aesthetic rather than political." Bush is simply too uncouth to follow into battle, even against an appalling violator of human rights. Their antiwar sentiments, therefore, were mostly an expression of elitist bias and a "loathsome... narcissism of small differences." This passage may seem intemperate. But it illustrates the emotional depth of Rieff's alienation from the human rights community, whose imagined influence on US foreign policy he evidently regrets.

Why Rieff chooses to pick this particular fight remains obscure, however. He sometimes attacks human rights militants for willing the end without willing the means. They want to prevent genocide, but they do not feel comfortable handing a blank check to the US military, particularly under Bush's control, to fight oppression abroad. I suppose someone could clobber Power and the others with this sort of objection. But it cannot be Rieff, whose book is basically a defense of this very stance.

Rieff's scorn for "the vacillations of the humanitarian left" seems unbalanced, in truth, because he is such a flagrant vacillator himself. He criticizes action and nonaction, imperialism and anti-imperialism, hope and hopelessness, taking sides and neutrality, too much caution and too little caution. And he assumes these contrary stances simultaneously, not sequentially. He blames liberals for addressing effects, not causes, and at the same time advocates a modest approach to the world's woes, alleviating wrongs rather than righting them, which boils down to addressing effects rather than causes. With one eye trained on Rwanda and the other on Falluja, he can neither renounce nor embrace "the selective recolonization of the world." He identifies wholeheartedly with "the victims" and then feels sick when he sees how

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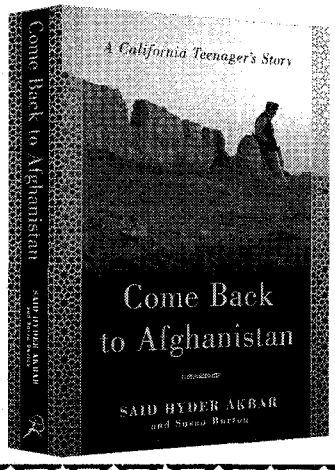

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easily victims become perpetrators. He aims to be skeptical but not paralyzed, even though he recognizes that militant anti-utopianism will demoralize well-meaning reformers.

Although he excoriates the humanitarian left for its incapacity to make up its mind, Rieff cannot decide what he thinks about humanitarian intervention. He confesses it quite explicitly: "I am of two minds." He does not like the Iraq War, but he cannot bring himself to criticize those who called for military intervention in Bosnia and Rwanda on moral grounds. And even about Iraq, his stance is hard to pin down. In these pages [see "No Exit Strategy," August 1] he recently berated Larry Diamond and others for criticizing the execution of the war rather than denouncing the war itself. But in this book, composed earlier, he catalogues all the usual failures of execution, especially the unforgivable neglect of policing after the regime fell and the arrogant refusal to take advantage of available expertise, domestic and foreign, that could have improved the performance of the occupying power. The disaster was not fated. Opportunities were squandered. No serious planning was undertaken for the post-conflict phase. Thus, the calamity in Iraq is "a self-inflicted wound, a morass of our own making." In other words, under better management, things could have turned out much better than they did.

What we have before us, then, is a co-written work—in effect, a debate between Rieff's interventionist self and his anti-interventionist self. In this very personal back-and-forth, both parties are exceptionally courteous and forbearing. Neither side accuses the other of abetting genocide or promoting futile wars, for example. The errors Rieff acknowledges are few and relatively minor, moreover. But the unresolved disagreement is no less serious for that.

Rieff valiantly presents his inner dissonance as intellectual and moral virtue: "If this book argues *for* anything, I suppose it is against consistency, against ideology and utopia." This candid admission of incoherence is meant to be, and is, disarming. Nor can we dismiss it as the fruit of laziness or sloppy thinking. It reflects, instead, a genuine moral dilemma. Powerful considerations point simultaneously in contrary directions. Anguished memories of Rwanda make it hard to renounce humanitarian intervention in principle, while sickening reports from Iraq make one hesitate to embrace the idea outright. Rieff's book vividly documents this apparent moral dilemma. That is its most valuable contribution.

On the other hand, his renunciation of consistency, ideology and utopia raises some serious questions, especially concerning his understanding of the origins of the Iraq War. By publicly renouncing utopianism, ideology and dogmatic humanitarianism, he seems to be implying that these factors influenced the calamitous decision to invade Iraq. But is this true? Doesn't Paul Berman, champion of the very idealism that Rieff now scorns, have a more realistic understanding of the influence of intellectuals when he laments the negligible role played by Kouchner's humanitarian considerations in shaping America's Iraq policy?

During the 1990s, according to Rieff, the "human rights revolution" provided "an over-arching moral context for the exercise of power by Western countries." A new international consensus emerged around the idea that "certain conduct by nations within their borders should not be tolerated." What happened, allegedly, was that "half a century of campaigning by human rights activists" had "a profound effect on the conduct of international affairs." Indeed, human rights activism produced nothing less than a "post-Cold War moralization of international politics." The willingness of the West to intervene in Kosovo signaled "a radical change in international affairs." And this was all a direct result of "people's faith in the idea of armed intervention in the name of democracy, human rights, and humanitarian need."

But Rieff's account of a human rights revolution is more fantasy than reality. Not even in the 1990s was the moral duty "to right the world's wrongs" an especially powerful driver of American foreign policy. Rieff is therefore exaggerating when he says, "Human rights became an organizing principle for action in the 1990s the way anticommunism had been throughout the Cold War." During the cold war, anticommunism was virtually America's public philosophy. It was an irresistibly powerful force, reorganizing government, commandeering vast resources, sanctioning brutalities committed by US allies in Africa, Latin America and Asia, and even provoking suppression of domestic dissent. Nothing similar could be said during the 1990s about human rights. The dignity of all people everywhere may have been celebrated from podiums, but in the field human rights were defended only fitfully and selectively. They filled a rhe-

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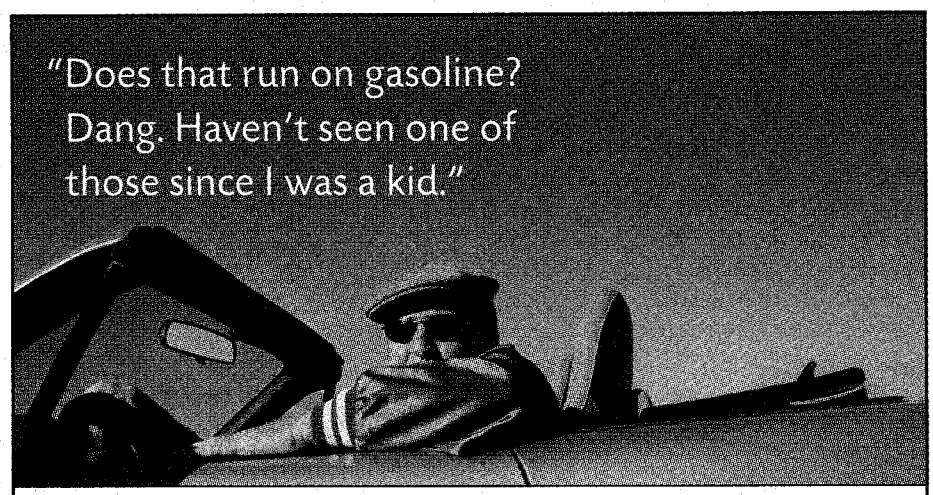
torical gap but did not mobilize the community the way lethal enmity did during the cold war and has done again during the war on terror. After 9/11 rescue missions became even more of a luxury than before, making it difficult, even impossible, to believe that the Iraq War sprang from a "hypermoralization of international political action."

Did the Kosovo campaign, undertaken outside the UN system to rescue potential victims of genocide, set the table for the invasion of Iraq? To be sure, Republican publicists like William Kristol shrewdly played the genocide card in the run-up to the Iraq War to embarrass antiwar liberals and split the left. But did a utopian desire to rescue the oppressed have any influence on the actual decision to invade Iraq? Does it make sense, when discussing the war party inside the Administration, to speak of the "Carterization" of the American right? The fact that a majority of Republicans strongly opposed an active military role for the United States in the Balkan wars suggests not. Genocide in distant lands, these Republicans argued, had nothing to do with American national security. The existence of a handful of advocates of the Iraq War who had earlier favored the Kosovo campaign, like Paul Wolfowitz, is not decisive here. The questions that must be asked are: Did such thinking have much influence in the inner circles of the Administration? Did Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld lose sleep over Rwanda? Had their closest Republican allies supported the dispatch of American troops to protect Kosovar Albanians on moral grounds? Was their principal objective in toppling Saddam to create a decent society for Iraqis? These questions bear directly on what Rieff considers the central revelation of his book, namely the marriage of the human rights left and the imperialist right. And the answer to every one of them is a resounding no.

The ruses and stratagems of the current Administration are well-known to Rieff. But he has not quite absorbed their corrosive significance. The human rights advocates who initially supported the invasion lent moral legitimacy to a right-wing war undertaken for reasons having little or nothing to do with human rights. There was no "marriage" of left humanitarianism and the imperialist right; the affair was never consummated, except in words. The consensus between right and left that Rieff claims to have identified



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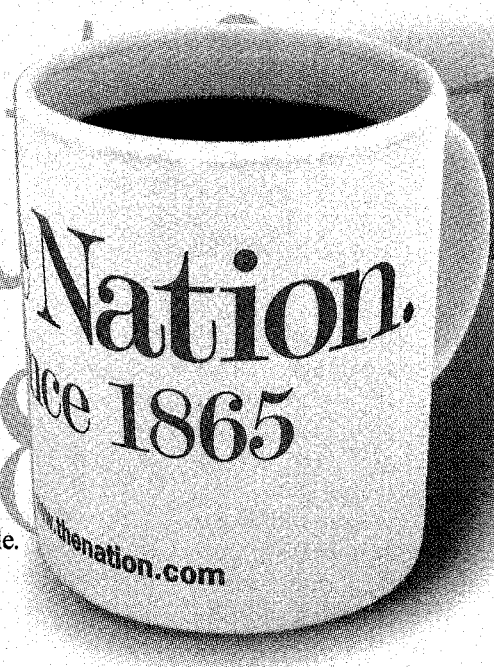

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was a false one—a sham agreement without a genuine meeting of minds. By revealing the Administration's cavalier indifference to the fate of ordinary Iraqis, the grievously botched occupation was bound to unravel the bogus accord and drive most of the humanitarian left (with notable exceptions, such as Paul Berman) back into opposition.

The critical point here is that the Iraq War was not a humanitarian intervention, as Kenneth Roth of Human Rights Watch, among others, has argued in an official paper. Why Rieff fails to clarify this elementary point is uncertain. Because humanitarian considerations had a negligible influence on the decision to invade, he should not have felt compelled, after visiting Iraq, radically to revise his thinking about interventions on humanitarian grounds. He dimly intuits this truth, it should be said, which is why he assures us that he would still support military action in Rwanda even after knowing everything he knows about Iraq. So why does he retreat into a pose of unprincipled inconsistency? He could have said, quite coherently, that the Iraq debacle teaches us less about the dangers of humanitarian intervention than about the appalling consequences of "the political instrumentalization of humanitarianism."

Having advocated a military response to genocide in the 1990s, Rieff now confesses to a sore conscience about the Iraq War. That is what makes his book so absorbing. *At the Point of a Gun* documents better than any other printed source the inner torment of humanitarian interventionists who, without forgetting Rwanda and Bosnia, have gazed into the Iraqi abyss. *Power and the Idealists* is equally riveting, but for the opposite reason. As intelligent as he obviously is, Berman has yet to pry open his eyes. His stubborn unwillingness to acknowledge that high ideals have been hijacked for nonideal ends, although not especially admirable, is a perfectly human reaction to a disastrous war launched and conducted under deceitful pretenses. The two books, in the end, leave us with one and the same question, namely: How is the left to regain its moral bearings in a world where the right has brazenly stolen progressive ideals (human rights, liberation, democracy, relief of suffering) and marched the country into a bloody calamity under a false flag of liberty? That this vital question remains unanswered is shocking and sobering. To have focused our minds on the challenge ahead is the shared achievement of these tortured and illuminating works. ■

The Uncertainty Principle

PANKAJ MISHRA

SLOW MAN. By J.M. Coetzee. Viking. 265 pp. $24.95.

Few art forms today seem to provoke as many obsequies and hallelujahs from their practitioners as the novel. According to V.S. Naipaul, the world has grown too large and complex for an essentially nineteenth-century literary form to grasp. The novel is "of no account," Naipaul told the *New York Times* recently, mocking people who persist in writing about "men and women falling in love, etc.," and who "give a little narrative here and there." On the other hand, Salman Rushdie thinks the novel is uniquely dialogical, the "crucial art form" of the "postmodern age," and even a kind of substitute for religion in the secularized West.

It is hard to imagine J.M. Coetzee, the most self-effacing of writers, offering grand statements on the novel and the state of the world. He may seem to speculate about them through his most recent fictional author, the aging novelist Elizabeth Costello, who in the book that bears her name offers many views on realism, the future of the novel, humanism, multiculturalism and death. But Coetzee also undermines our temptation to exalt him as a wise man by often making Costello spout transparent nonsense.

Nevertheless, few European or American writers since Thomas Mann have been as concerned as Coetzee to examine the novelist's relationship to his bourgeois origins, subjects and audience. He reintroduces Costello in *Slow Man*, which begins with an aging Australian photographer called Paul Rayment having a near-fatal biking accident. Lying in bed with an amputated leg, Rayment wonders about his sixty-odd solitary and childless years on earth. "*Frivolous* is not a bad word to sum him up.... If in the course of a lifetime he has done no significant harm, he has done no good either. He will leave no trace behind, not even an heir to carry on his name."

With his sense of futility, his simple regrets and longings, Rayment is an average character in a contemporary novel. Most novelists choosing this slightly banal figure as their central character would feel compelled to entangle him romantically with someone; it would be the easiest way to give him some emotional depth, open up the possibility of "character development" and make him attractive to readers, who often bring to novels their own unfulfilled fantasies. Accordingly, Rayment does fall for his middle-aged Croatian nurse, Marijana, and tries to assume control over her life by offering to pay for her son's education. But he has not reckoned with her proud husband or her European past.

There are enough class and emotional complications here to stretch any fictional narrative for a few hundred pages. But Coetzee seems too conscious that the novel is mostly formula, and that its characters acquire meaning and depth only to the extent that the writer invokes the social and political prejudices he shares with his readers. His recent works express a dignified refusal to play the usual game. Indeed, much of their interest arises not so much from losing oneself in Coetzee's delineations of character and plot as in observing what this extremely intelligent and superbly self-aware artist does to his creations.

In *Slow Man* Coetzee provides a closer view of the authorial power of manipulation by bringing Elizabeth Costello into Rayment's placid life. Rayment is disconcerted by the knowledge Costello appears to possess about him and dislikes the possibility that much of what he does—falling in love, having sex with a blind woman—has been arranged by her. "You treat me like a puppet.... You treat everyone like a puppet. You make up stories and bully us into playing them out for you." He tries to resist Costello's attempt to make him grow by throwing him into sexual and emotional intrigue: "I am not an exceptional person, Mrs. Costello, and I cannot make myself exceptional just for your sake. I am sorry." And he is exasperated by her persistence: "What I don't understand is, seeing that I am so dull, so unresponsive to your schemes, why you persist with me."

Costello is equally impatient. She wants Rayment to hurry up and do something or become someone. But Rayment appears to be slow in embracing his destiny and

Pankaj Mishra's most recent book is An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux).*

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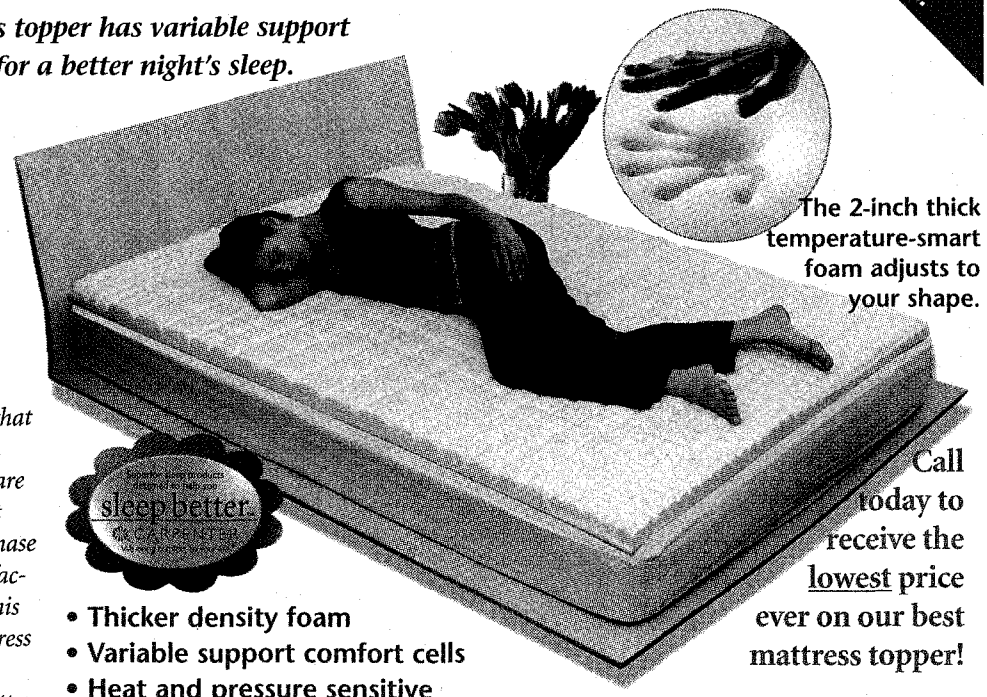

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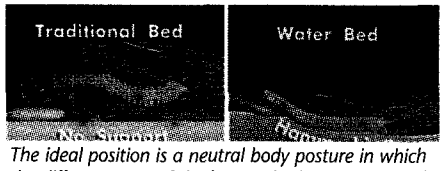

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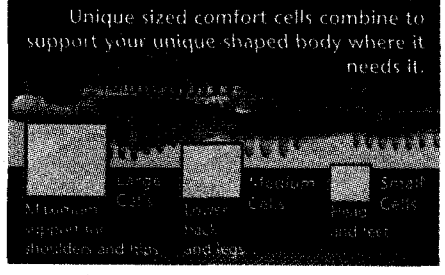

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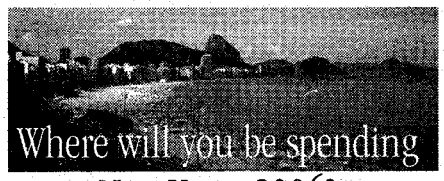
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becoming an existential hero. "Please stop dithering," she tells him and confesses that she is "unhappy because nothing is happening." She laments that other characters in the novel mope like "tramps in Beckett... wasting time, being wasted by time."

Images of exhaustion and death haunt *Slow Man* as much as they did Coetzee's two most recent novels. Costello says,

> I can't begin to tell you how tired I am. And not with the kind of tiredness that can be fixed by a good night's sleep in a proper bed. The tiredness I refer to has become part of my being. It is like a dye that has begun to seep into everything I do, everything I say.... And not just the bodily self. The mind too: slack, ready for easeful sleep.

All this may make *Slow Man* sound like the kind of novel in which the novelist, exhausted by a lifetime of making up stories, lays bare the rickety machinery he uses to create passing illusions for readers, while providing enough critical commentary on his own work to keep literary critics and academics busy. But such metafictions are by now a commonplace form of artistic narcissism, one that Coetzee seems unlikely to endorse.

In Coetzee's previous novel, Elizabeth Costello thinks that "people who believed in art, or at least in the artist" have a "childish faith." "No matter that god had failed, and Socialism," she wryly observes, "there was still Dostoevsky to guide one, or Rilke, or Van Gogh." It is not just Costello's books that "evince no faith in art." Coetzee's own prose in *Disgrace*, *Youth* and *Elizabeth Costello* is spare and analytic rather than richly descriptive. Eschewing metaphor and often courting cliché, his sentences seem to deliberately defy conventional notions of "beautiful writing"—the tyrannical aesthetic of Nabokov, from whose influence Coetzee sought early in his career to liberate himself, and whose fetish for finely turned sentences still dominates writing courses and shapes much new fiction in the West.

Though wary of the bourgeois idolatry of style, Coetzee shies away from using the novel as a radical political critique. Having lived in apartheid South Africa, he has had a deeper experience of organized oppression and has witnessed more closely than most writers how the possession of inordinate power causes what the autobiographical narrator of *Youth* calls the "atrophy of the moral life." Indeed, it is not hard to imagine Coetzee as a writer in the postcolonial mold of Naipaul or Rushdie—a writer who transmutes his homelessness into globe-spanning fictions and is rewarded by his Western readers with literary and political authority.

But Coetzee has always faced up honestly to his helplessness before violence and suffering—the great facts of the contemporary world. As he said in an early interview: "I, as a person, as a personality, am overwhelmed, that my thinking is thrown into confusion and helplessness, by the fact of suffering in the world, and not only human suffering. These fictional constructions of mine are paltry, ludicrous defenses against that being-overwhelmed, and, to me, transparently so."

More acutely than any other contemporary novelist, Coetzee has been aware of the aesthetic difficulty and moral conceit of turning man-made suffering into art. Certainly, his confession of inadequacy is far from the bold assumption Naipaul and Rushdie share even as they argue about what literary form is likely to capture best a vital and diverse human world: the assumption that the individual author has the intellectual and spiritual resources to describe a human condition larger than his own, and indeed to convey it, in either fictional or nonfictional forms, to his easily distracted middle-class audience. Increasingly, Coetzee seems to lack the egotism necessary to play the role of the wise, omniscient narrator. Much of his fictional energy is now devoted to revealing how writers struggle no less anxiously than their characters with a human self increasingly fragmented and diminished by the pressures of modern life.

The French-Romanian essayist E.M. Cioran once wrote that although "we know a great deal about ourselves," "we are nothing"; as a result, "the material of literature...grows thinner every day, and that of the novel, more limited." The only novels worthy of attention today, Cioran asserted, are "precisely those novels in which...nothing happens, and which are a research without points of reference, an experiment pursued within an unfailing vacuity, a vacuity experienced through sensation, as well as a dialectic paradoxically frozen." Cioran was writing about his friend Samuel Beckett, and he looked forward to the "last novelist" bringing down the shutters on the "epic of the bourgeois era." But his words increasingly seem apt for Coetzee, an admirer of Beckett, whose recent novels play out a dialectic between bodily pain and intellectual uncertainty while casting doubt on almost every grand claim made in the past fifty years

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Slow Man shows Coetzee writing himself deeper into silence. He is unlikely to be the last novelist—the novel will live, even flourish, at least in the West, and novelists will continue to pretend to be seers as they meet the general book-buyer's demand for entertainment and instruction. But Coetzee may turn out to be one of the last great novelists, exalted by the intensity of his self-awareness and his willingness to make his home in a spiritual and intellectual impasse of which few of his contemporaries were even aware. ■

Writer's Block

An e-mail from my rabbi, who's moved to the West Coast,
says they're "happier than pigs in shit." Something
forced about that. People with a new grandchild don't boast
that way, usually. But my rabbi's different, trying,
despite fame as a teacher, to prove something. Let's speculate
that those pastoral visits to sickbeds, those weddings, those grave-side
prayers, gave him an anchor to the unremarkable, the basic
nurturing commonness of others' lives. Out there
he's free of all that—or denied it?—and is hoping
that—if he tries writing daily—he'll capture
in a novel everything he knows. Joy. Despair.
"Some days," he says, "I feel like jumping off the Golden Gate."
Odd to hear that from a man who once said that God
turns tragedy and comedy into history, if we wait.

Alan Feldman

Passion

It isn't the choir of small boys, casting about, singing shyly or
with perfect oval mouths,
and it isn't the gentle rocking solo on the violin
played by a man who'd sooner mooch a meal from anyone than pay,
and it isn't the lovely rapture of the cellist who, between her legs and
in the fluent embrace of her arms,
gives birth to a god who makes the audience tremble,
and it isn't the white-haired athlete marking time with his stick and
coaxing the lot of them to music,
and it isn't the long-dead Lutheran *Kapellmeister* who built this
temple of sound with a crew of amateurs,
and it isn't the packed house too eager to spring to its feet in applause,
or the flaws of performance, or the whole tragic lift of the night as
the tale surges to its close.
It is all of them. And it passes. And will never be heard again on earth.

David Mason

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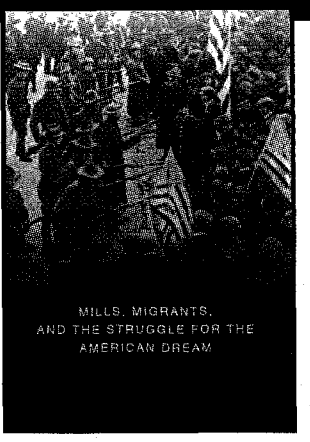

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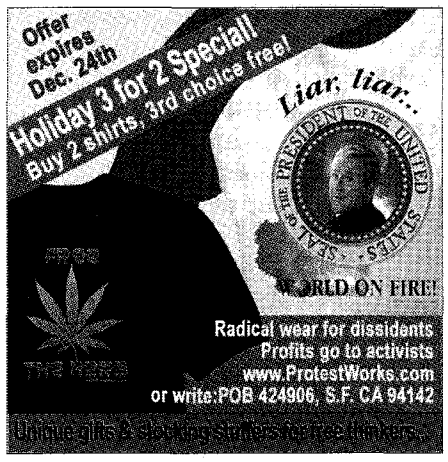

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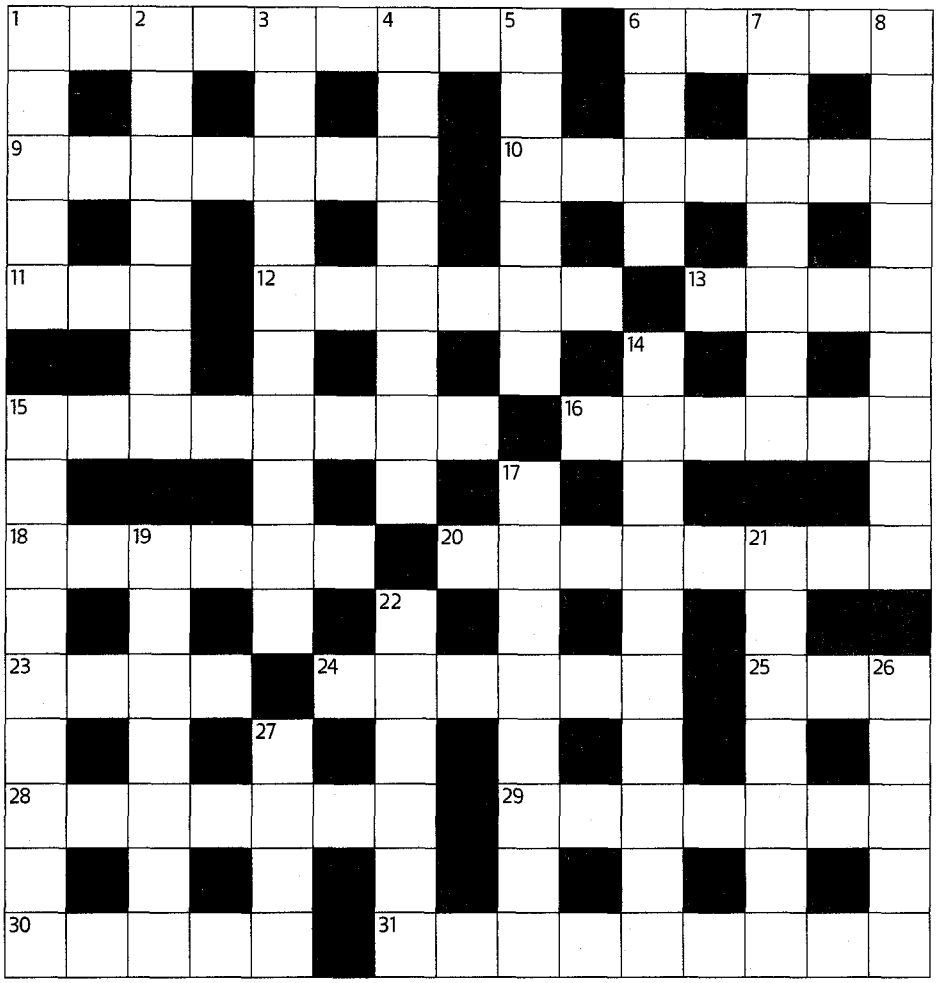

ACROSS

1 There may be a point to what a cow does to object, but iron may be responsible for it. (9)

6 His work was fabulous, but we might consider him to have a backward pose. (5)

9 Put your faith in this, although the wild set takes the wrong turn in it. (7)

10 What one might be told to do before shipping out, giving a sort of push to copy the middle part. (5,2)

11, 12 and **13** A rather fancy name for the poet, with a sort of band to have for the answer. (3,4,2,4)

15 There's a lot of paper here when the rest is scattered about it, to make a decorative flower, of a sort. (8)

16 Is the USSR confused by such a good rating? It still was the USSR! (6)

18 Ever return it with what is all right inside it? If you do you have to take the authority back! (6)

20 A possibly great start, having sat improperly, but you'll see a lot of ships make them. (8)

23 See 25

24 A little firm, but you have to fix the wire attached to it—it's just a shell of itself. (6)

25 and **23** Does it involve 30-29 when you tread high above the stage on it? (3-4)

28 You won't agree if you do get to send its contents. (7)

30 and **29** If they catch you doing it, you won't be taking certain steps. (5-7)

31 A sloppy tangle of green, unfortunately for the one they shouldn't criticize as the bearer of the tidings. (9)

DOWN

1 Fish, and what it shouldn't have done if you're going to eat it. (5)

2 Certainly not inner garments—but if you do it to them, you may have gotten too big for your breeches! (7)

3 Little Tom takes a sharp turn—but you expect such to be sharp. (10)

4 One who has been cooped up might be inert (and warped!), but in the end that's the way the newspapers say she was born! (8)

5 The fourth Musketeer was one, with the power to move you to study. (6)

6 When the door is this, it doesn't mean you can put jam in it—even though it sounds like you can! (4)

7 Takes off the active list, since the cupboard probably has them. (7)

8 What you might find if the birds have broken into the soft-drink containers? They like to show off! (9)

14 Plant where you get to feel sorry because the wrong name is attached to one. (3,7)

15 Away off kilter, just the opposite of the way things might be fastened down! (7,2)

17 Do they haul things on the Volga, according to what has been written more than once? (8)

19 Is in the dells, perhaps, but travelers are likely to throw a few things in them. (7)

21 What is the clock doing on your bed! (7)

22 Certainly one of Shakespeare's low comedians! (6)

26 A bright burner in the night, says the poet. (5)

27 Put your back up this way, if you get fed up with your head. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3008

C	L	A	P	T	R	A	P		T	O	U	S	L	E
A		R		H		B				S		K		S
U	N	C	L	E	A	R		T	O	C	S	I	N	S
G		L		B		A		O		E		D		A
H	I	A	L	E	A	H		N	O	O	N	D	A	Y
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I		A		C		O		W		A		I		S
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T		A		O				E		B		R		T
E	L	L	E	R	Y		T	R	A	I	P	S	E	S

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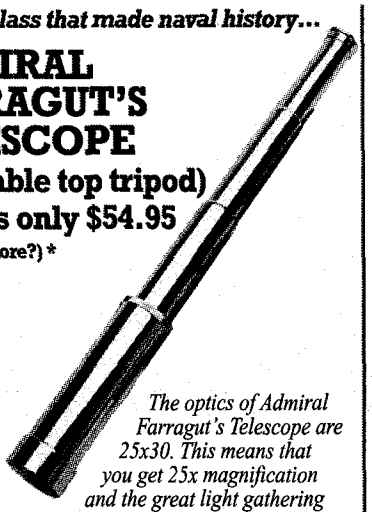

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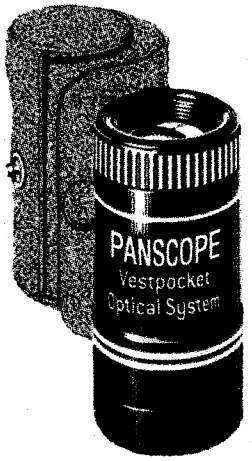

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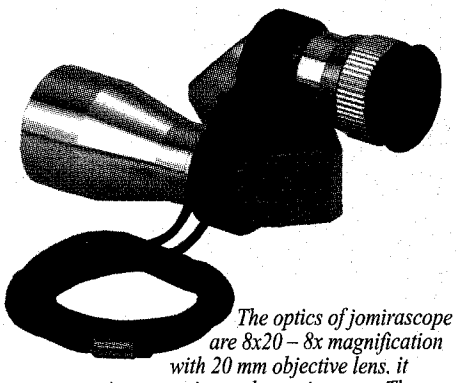

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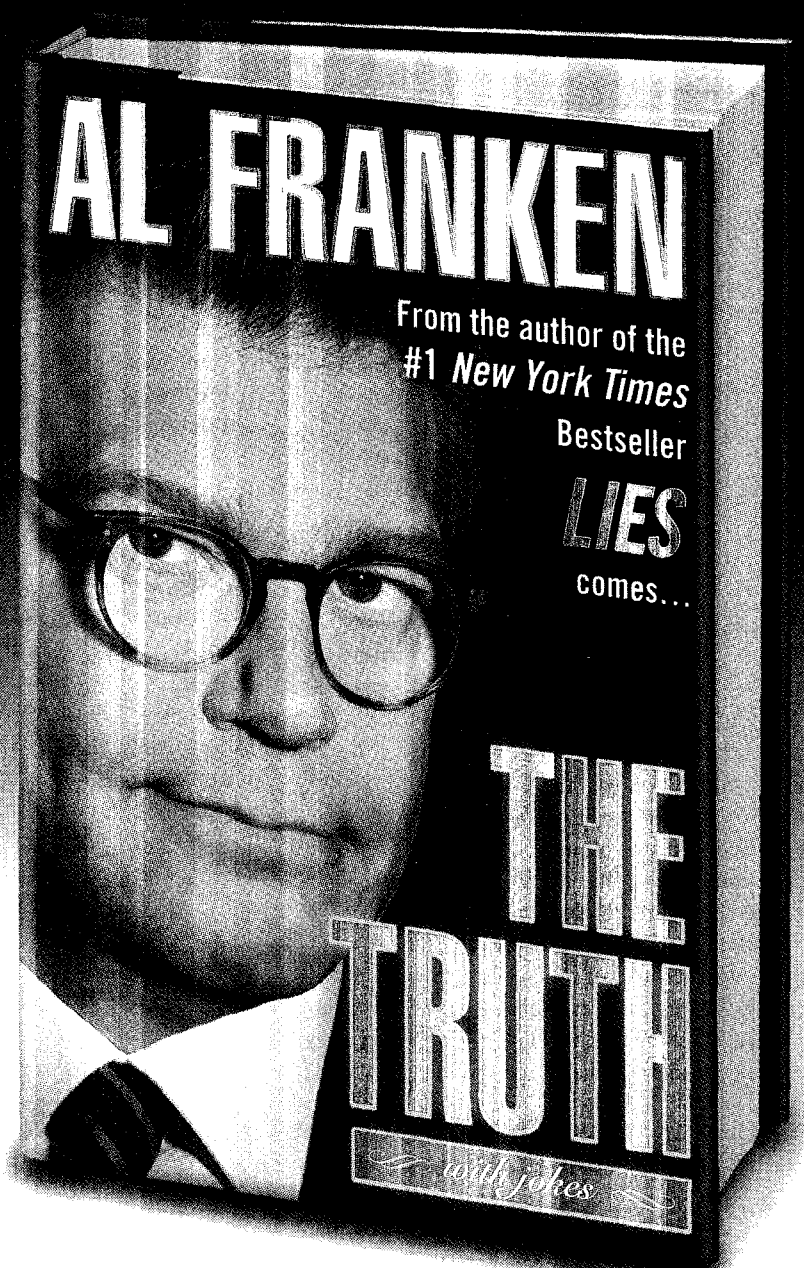

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